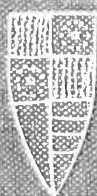
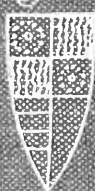
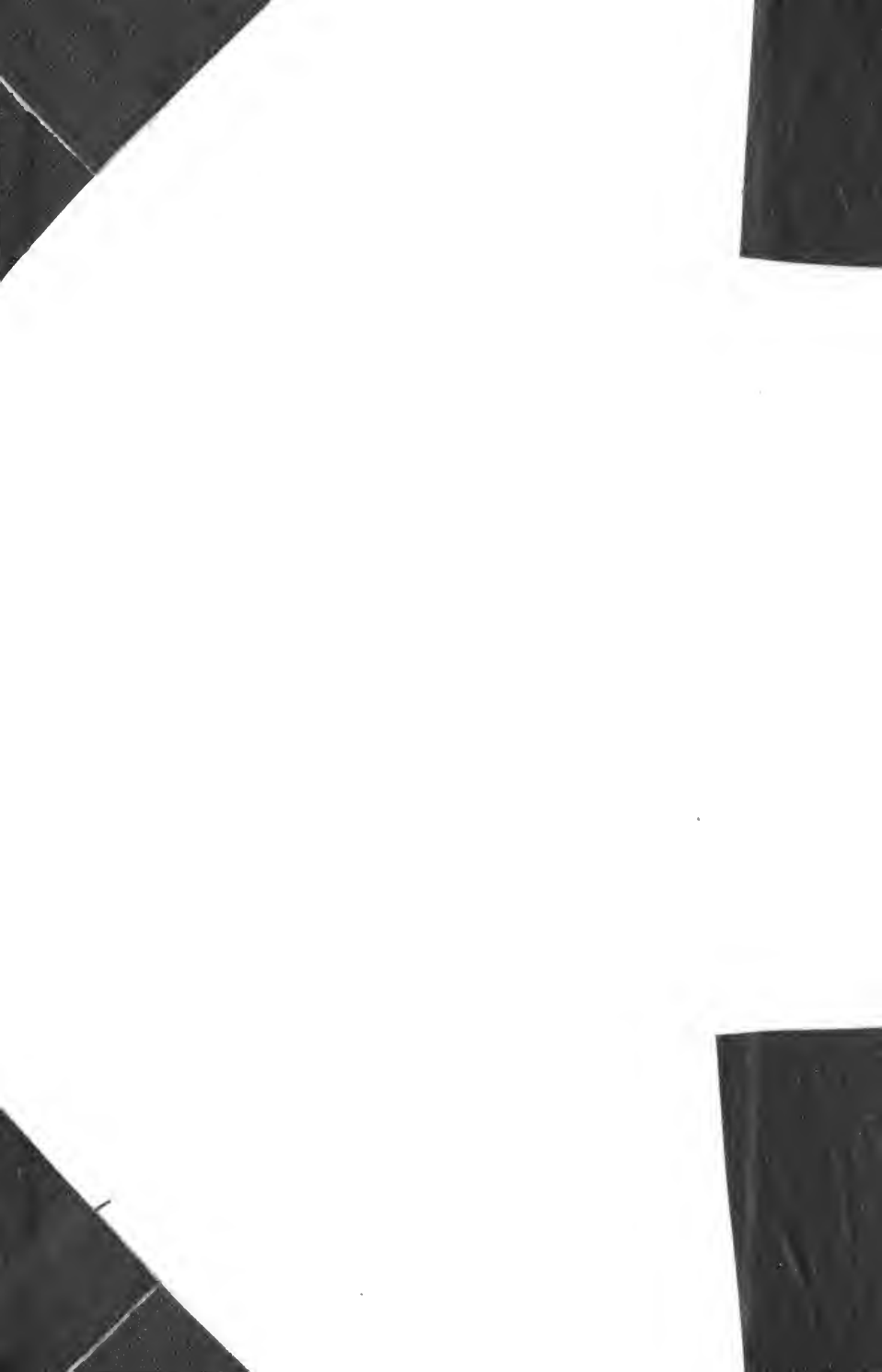


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"Come, thou must not be in this humour with me."
(*Falstaff and Dame Quickly, p. 155*)

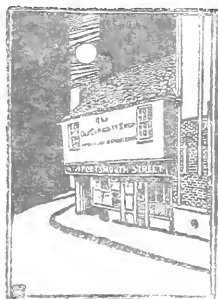
SHAKESPEARE'S STORIES OF THE ENGLISH KINGS

RETOLD BY THOMAS CARTER

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY AUTHOR OF "STORIES
FROM SHAKESPEARE" "SHAKESPEARE PURITAN
& RECUSANT" "SHAKESPEARE & HOLY SCRIPTURE"

WITH SIXTEEN FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS BY

GERTRUDE DEMAIN HAMMOND R.I.



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112

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK WITH
ALL AFFECTION
TO MY WIFE

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Preface

IT is inevitable, in retelling the stories of Shakespeare's English Kings, that we should recall the names of Charles and Mary Lamb. These gifted authors are associated immortally with Shakespeare, and their *Tales* must remain a classic for youthful readers, to whom a simple prose rendering is of great value as an introduction to the genius of our greatest poet.

The *Histories*, however, were not included in the *Tales*, hence there is opportunity for an endeavour to provide a prose version of this attractive section of the great plays. Beginning with the period before the Roman invader came to our shores, and passing through the times of Plantagenet and Tudor to the opening days of Elizabeth, Shakespeare has presented in his wonderful series an almost complete view of the great figures of English history, indicating with a sure touch the movements, crises, and turning-points of our national development. The canvas is a crowded one, but there is no superfluous figure, and from the king to the peasant he holds the mirror of genius up to Nature and reflects life. The inner significance has been well indicated by Walter Pater. "True, on the whole, to fact, it is another side of kingship which he has made

prominent in his English histories. The irony of kingship—average human nature, flung with a wonderfully pathetic effect into the vortex of great events; tragedy of everyday quality heightened in degree only by the conspicuous scene which does but make those who play their part there conspicuously unfortunate; the utterance of common humanity straight from the heart, but refined like other common things for kingly uses by Shakespeare's unfailing eloquence: such, unconsciously for the most part, though palpably enough to the careful reader, is the conception under which Shakespeare has arranged the lights and shadows of the story of the English Kings, emphasising merely the light and shadow inherent in it, and keeping very close to the original authorities, not simply in the general outline of these dramatic histories, but sometimes in their very expression."

The story of *King Lear* properly belongs to this group, but it has already appeared in the author's companion volume, *Stories from Shakespeare*. In both books the poet's verse has frequently been printed where the lines are so simple that it is unnecessary to paraphrase them. From these quotations the youthful reader will learn something of the glamour of the wonderful originals, and the author trusts that the examples given will make boys and girls eager to read more of the poet's own work in due season—in other words, that the books will prove to be for many a veritable Gateway to Shakespeare.

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King Cymbeline

“ ’Tis slander ;

*Whose edge is sharper than the sword ; whose tongue
Outvenoms all the worms of Nile ; whose breath
Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie
All corners of the world : kings, queens, and states,
Maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave
This viperous slander enters.”*

Act III, Scene 4.

IN days of long ago, when Phoenician galleys ploughed their way from the land-locked Mediterranean to the rough sea channel which divided Gaul from Albion, there lived in the wild wooded plains and swampy lowlands of our country a race of hardy Kelts who had come from the east in one of the great movements of the Aryan peoples. They were in person tall and well-made, with fair hair and blue eyes, and excelled in hunting and fighting. They kept large herds of cattle and droves of pigs ; bred small, swift horses, and trained great dogs, mastiffs and wolfhounds, for hunting. They used, upon the rivers and lakes, canoes of wood and coracles made of wicker and leather, and worked mines for lead and tin. They lived in scattered villages of neat, wattled cottages, thatched with straw or bracken ; but each tribe had a dun or

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stronghold, stockaded, walled and entrenched, within which people and cattle could find shelter in times of war or foray. In character the people were brave, impetuous and open-handed, yet somewhat given to quarrels, and always impatient of control. The principal tribes were the Brigantes in the north; the Silures in the west, under a king called Caractacus; and the Icenians in the east, under a king named Cassivelaunus or Cassibelan, and later under his nephew Cunobelinus, or, as he has been called, "the radiant Cymbeline."

Across the Channel in the kingdom of the Gauls, in the year 55 B.C., the strong legions of Julius Caesar were encamped and the ambitious Roman soldier was meditating a descent upon Britain, the white cliffs of which country he could discern upon the northern horizon. Cassibelan, whose stronghold was at Verulam (St. Albans), was head king of the tribes north of the Thames, and when news was brought that the conquerors of Gallia had landed near Dover, he gathered his warriors and prepared to drive back the Roman invader. Footmen, horsemen and charioteers answered the summons of their chief, and soon a numerous army had assembled on the north of the Thames valley. The Britons were specially expert in the management of their war-chariots, turning and wheeling with wonderful celerity, leaping in and out when the signal was given, and running along the shafts to fling their bronze spears, while the swift-footed horses were rushing at full speed over the ground. The chiefs wore a helmet with streaming plumes, and each soldier, in addition to his spear, axe, broadsword or club, carried a shield of skin and wicker, and a horn, which he blew when the onset was

sounded. And so, with the rattle of the chariot wheels, the stamping of the horses, the clashing of arms, the blowing of horns and the war-cries of the excited warriors, a British charge was a terrifying thing, even to the hardy Roman legionaries, who had conquered Gaul and Germania and spread the fame of the Empire through all the countries of the world.

Prominent among the followers of Cassibelan was a chief named Sicilius, a man whose bravery had gained for him the highest approval. Later, under Tenantius, his conspicuous courage caused him to receive from the king the surname of Leonatus, or the Lion, and with his two sons he continued to fight valiantly against the Romans. But in one terrible battle, the two young men were slain, and Leonatus was so overcome with sorrow that he died of a broken heart. His wife, after giving birth to an infant son, also passed away, and King Cymbeline, having a great pity for the orphaned child, adopted him, and gave him the name of Posthumus Leonatus.

As Posthumus grew up to manhood he was trained in all the graces and exercises of the Court, and was loved and praised by all, being a sample to the youngest and a worthy companion of the wisest and gravest. King Cymbeline grew very fond of him, the more so because of a great sorrow which treachery had brought into his own life, for his two young sons, the eldest just three years old, had been stolen out of the royal nursery, and despite all the anxious search which had been made for their recovery, no word had ever been received concerning their fate. The mother of the stolen princes had not long survived their loss, and died, leaving an infant daughter, who

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thus became the heiress to the crown and kingdom of Britain.

Twenty years passed away, and Posthumus and Imogen, for this was the name of the Princess, grew up together. They shared their games and walks and lessons, and were like the most loving brother and sister. King Cymbeline married, for his second wife, a lady who had one son, a conceited, cowardly, clownish youth named Cloten, who was a contrast in everything to the graceful and accomplished Leonatus. His mother did all she could for Cloten, and King Cymbeline placed him in high position, and let it be known that some day he was to wed the Princess Imogen ; but nothing could conceal the fact that he was a clumsy, ignorant boor, and he became the secret laughing-stock of the lords and courtiers. Every day something would occur to place Cloten in invidious comparison with Posthumus, and the Queen began to hate the handsome youth who clearly had a larger share than her own son in the affection of the King.

The Princess made no concealment of her love for Posthumus, and when she knew the story of his birth and that he was no brother of hers, her regard for him became deeper than any sisterly devotion, and she loved him with all her heart, and finally became his wife. It was a secret marriage, for they knew the Queen and Cloten would oppose it bitterly, and that the King would be influenced by his clever wife ; but the Queen, who always professed to entertain great love for Posthumus, soon found out all about it, and carried the news to Cymbeline, and demanded vengeance upon the man who had thus flouted the King and supplanted her own son. Cloten, enraged and indignant, sought

Posthumus, and drew his sword and attacked him, but, being no match for Leonatus, his weapon was soon turned aside, and some lords rushed in and separated the rivals.

Cymbeline, urged by the wicked and revengeful Queen, and angry at what had occurred, banished Posthumus from the kingdom, and ordered Imogen to be imprisoned ; and, because he felt somewhat pricked in his own conscience, he allowed his rage to carry him beyond proper bounds, and used language which was very cruel, and performed actions towards his daughter which were unworthy of a father and a king.

When the news was brought to the Princess that her husband was banished, and that she herself was condemned to close imprisonment until he had left the kingdom, she determined, in spite of the command of Cymbeline, to have a farewell interview with Posthumus. They met in a quiet spot, and for a time could hardly control their grief. She gave him a diamond ring which once belonged to her mother, and bade him keep it on his finger until she was dead and he was free to woo and wed another wife. In return he fastened upon her arm a beautiful bracelet, which he called the manacle of their love, and besought her never to part with it. Together they vowed to be faithful and constant as true husband and wife, and each accepted the jewel as the token of undying fidelity. They were almost brokenhearted with grief at the thought of parting, and the wicked Queen, who had come upon them as she was walking in the garden, watched their sorrow with a cruel smile. She meant to betray the lovers to the King when opportunity served.

Straining his wife to his breast, and hardly seeing

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her for the tears which filled his eyes, Posthumus exclaimed in a broken voice :

*“ My queen ! my mistress !
O lady ! weep no more, lest I give cause
To be suspected of more tenderness
Than doth become a man ! I will remain
The loyal'st husband that did e'er plight troth :
My residence in Rome at one Philario's,
Who to my father was a friend, to me
Known but by letter : thither write, my queen,
And with mine eyes I'll drink the words you
send,
Though ink be made of gall.”*

At that moment the King approached, and, being summoned by the Queen, he beheld his daughter in the arms of Posthumus. Wild with rage, Cymbeline sprang forward and confronted the lovers. Calling Posthumus a baseborn beggar, he ordered him to leave the kingdom forthwith under pain of death if he disobeyed. He denounced his daughter as a disloyal thing, a vile creature, past all grace and all obedience, a mad woman who would disgrace the throne and make it a seat for baseness. His anger shook him with the force of a tempest, and Posthumus saw that entreaty would be in vain. With a despairing glance at the grief-stricken face of Imogen, and leaving his faithful servant Pisanio behind him, the unhappy Leonatus went out to his exile.

Pisanio afterwards followed him to the place of embarkation, and watched the ship fade upon the horizon. Posthumus stood upon the deck waving his

handkerchief in farewell, and Pisanio waited until no further glimpse of his beloved master could be discerned, and nought was visible but the wide stretch of the tumbling waves of the Channel and the wild sea-birds which flung themselves against the sweeping wind.

When he returned to the palace, the Queen, who had determined to use him in the furtherance of her wicked devices against Imogen, commended him to the service of the Princess, and she, nothing unwilling, took him to be her servant. Then the Queen began to undermine his faithfulness, for in the dark recesses of her own evil mind she was meditating deadly means to gain the throne of Britain and a crown for her son Cloten. She had never loved King Cymbeline, though she dissembled well and had never given him cause to suspect the truth. The Princess Imogen was sole heiress to the kingdom, and her marriage with Cloten would have made his succession secure. But now that all was overthrown by the love of the Princess for Posthumus Leonatus the Queen determined to reach the throne by other means. She made up her mind to destroy Imogen by poison, and afterwards, by the same subtle instrument, to bring death upon her kingly husband.

She had a physician named Cornelius, a quiet man very skilful in the compounding of medicines, drugs and poisons. She thought him to be more simple than he really was, and while trying to deceive was herself deceived. She said that she loved to try the power of his poisons upon animals, and then to search for some remedy whereby the deadly potion could be rendered harmless. She invited him to come to her chamber. He came, carrying a small box in his hand.

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When the Queen had dismissed her ladies, she turned to Cornelius and said, "Now, master doctor, have you brought those drugs?" "Pleaseth your highness, ay," was his reply; "here they are, madam; but I beseech your Grace, without offence, my conscience bids me ask wherefore you have commanded of me these most poisonous compounds, which are the movers of a languishing death, slow but deadly." He knew even while he was speaking that the poison in the box was not deadly, but that it would stupefy the senses for a time and produce every appearance of death until the power of the drug had passed away, and then the person who took it would be stronger and fresher than ever; but he deceived the Queen because he suspected that she was meditating mischief against some one, and he feared to provide her with the means of killing the King or the Princess. With a winning smile upon her fair face the treacherous Queen replied:

*"I wonder, doctor,
Thou ask'st me such a question. Have I not been
Thy pupil long? Hast thou not learn'd me how
To make perfumes? distil? preserve? yea, so,
That our great king himself doth woo me oft
For my confections? Having thus far proceeded,—
(Unless thou think'st me devilish), is't not meet
That I did amplify my judgement in
Other conclusions? I will try the forces
Of these thy compounds on such creatures as
We count not worth the hanging, (but none human),
To try the vigour of them and apply
Allayments to their act, and by them gather
Their several virtues, and effects."*

As she with smiling face thus explained her purpose, Pisanio, now the servant of Imogen, came into the room, having been summoned by the Queen. When the doctor had been dismissed, she turned to Pisanio and greeted him with winning grace. She promised him great advancement if he would set himself to influence the mind of the Princess by many cautious words and skilful phrases, to an affection for Cloten, her son. While the lady spoke, with seeming inadvertence she dropped the box which contained the poison, and Pisanio, seeing its glitter, stooped and offered it to the Queen. With a gracious bow she refused it, and said :

“ Take it for thy labour :

It is a thing I made, which hath the king

Five times redeem’d from death : I do not know

What is more cordial :—nay, I pr’ythee, take it ;

It is an earnest of a further good

That I mean to thee. Tell thy mistress how

The case stands with her ; do’t as from thyself.

Think what a chance thou changest on ; but think

Thou hast thy mistress still, to boot, my son,

Who shall take notice of thee. I’ll move the king

To any shape of thy preferment, such

As thou’lt desire ; and then myself, I chiefly,

That set thee on to this desert, am bound

To load thy merit richly.”

Her words were gentle and meant to be winning, but here again her cunning was of no avail ; for Pisanio read the black characters of her wicked heart as easily as an open book, and he went away more decided than ever to be faithful to the Princess and her exiled

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husband. But he carried with him the box which contained the remedy so highly spoken of by the Queen, and thought that some day it might prove useful ; for if it had saved the life of the King on many occasions, Pisanio felt sure that it would be of benefit to others. The Queen was well content to let him go, for she hoped that the sorrow of Imogen for her husband, now torn from her, would possibly bring about an illness, which Pisanio might try to remedy by the medicine which he had in the box, and thus, unwittingly, a faithful servant in his honest desire to do good to his mistress would bring about her speedy death.

The poor Princess, alienated from her father, separated from her husband, and the object of the hateful pursuit of Cloten and the cunning malice of the wicked Queen, soon realised that her position was a very sad one ; and by a cruel stroke of Fate another scheme of villainy was about to be practised against her. The Queen was trying to destroy her happiness or her life ; this unknown enemy was about to ruin Imogen's good name and blast her honour and her happiness. It had all come about in a very simple way. Posthumus Leonatus had crossed over into Gaul, and after a long journey arrived at the house of his father's friend in Rome. Philario welcomed him gladly, and soon the novelty of his new surroundings abated something of the keenness of his sorrow at the separation from his wife Imogen. After a time he became interested in the light conversation of the noblemen who frequented Philario's house, and in his eagerness to defend the good name of Britain, Posthumus entered into a friendly dispute with an Italian named Iachimo, a Frenchman, a Dutchman, and a Spaniard. Each spoke in highest terms of the

beauty, honour and purity of the women of his country, but Posthumus averred that the ladies of Britain were not excelled nor equalled anywhere for beauty, honesty, chastity and virtue. The paragon of all was his own dear Princess Imogen, his wife, whose parting gift was upon his finger, and the precious diamond which reflected every beam of the pure sunlight was not more flawless than she.

Iachimo was a handsome, witty gallant, who often boasted of his conquests in love ; he was plausible in speech, and had many outward qualities which were likely to dazzle a foolish, inconstant mind ; but he had no principle, and thought little of truth and constancy. He laughed when Posthumus spoke of the virtuous Imogen, and said that he was sure this paragon of women could easily be tempted from the path of wifely duty. If the Briton would wager her diamond ring against ten thousand ducats, Iachimo undertook to prove that in a very short time the Princess would have forgotten all about her exiled lover and have given her affection to the Italian gallant who had sought her from across the seas.

If Posthumus had realised his duty to his wife he would have clouted Iachimo across the ears and have finished with him, but he was weak and allowed himself to be drawn into an unworthy compact, although his absolute confidence in Imogen was, no doubt, the cause of his folly. When the wager was accepted and the stakes deposited, the Italian started for Britain and in due time arrived at the palace of King Cymbeline. After his reception he was introduced to the Princess, and was welcomed by her because he was the bearer of a letter from her husband. Trembling with eagerness,

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Imogen read the epistle, and then for the satisfaction of Iachimo quoted what Posthumus had written concerning his messenger :

“He is one of the noblest note, to whose kindnesses I am most infinitely tied. Reflect upon him accordingly, as you value your trust.

LEONATUS.”

The Princess, a woman of bright, vivacious temperament, with a loving, pure, and generous heart, accepted these words of commendation from her absent lord, and welcomed Iachimo with unsuspecting warmth. Then, with her confidence enkindled towards him, the subtle Italian began to pour the poison of his evil nature into her mind by suggesting that Posthumus, who had left her, brokenhearted, weeping bitter tears at the parting, had soon learned how to console himself. He was the loudest ruffler of a merry band of companions and had earned the name of the British reveller. He had found the ladies of Rome to be very attractive, and already, said Iachimo, he was not only forgetful, but unfaithful, wasting his time with reckless companions, and forgetting his duty and his faith so far as Imogen was concerned. The fluent speech and ready suggestions of the Italian seemed to bear the stamp of truth, and the Princess listened to the story with growing horror. Perceiving her dismay and rising anger, Iachimo thought that the time had come for him to make a final step. He pleaded his own love for the British Princess. At first she could not credit her hearing, but when she realised what he meant, her indignation broke out against him and she overwhelmed him in the torrent of a noble woman's wrath. He saw then that he had

gone too far, and that all the confidence of Posthumus in the nobility of his wife was well founded ; but he was determined to obtain the stakes of his wager by fair means or foul. Suddenly changing his tactics, he assured the indignant lady that all his words were mere pretence, that Posthumus was living in high repute in Rome, and his faith to Imogen was unbroken and unsullied. When he had reassured her, he begged her to forget everything that he had said against her lord or spoken of his own affection, and in token of her forgiveness he craved that she would grant a request he had to make which concerned Posthumus and certain noble Romans.

“ *Pray, what is't ?* ” said Imogen.

“ *Some dozen Romans of us, and your lord,*” replied Iachimo,

“ *(The best feather of our wing), have mingled sums
To buy a present for the emperor ;
Which I, the factor for the rest, have done
In France : 'tis plate of rare device, and jewels
Of rich and exquisite form ; their values great ;
And I am something curious, being strange,
To have them in safe stowage : may it please you
To take them in protection ?
They are in a trunk,
Attended by my men : I will make bold
To send them to you, only for this night ;
I must aboard to-morrow.*”

Imogen gladly undertook to be responsible for the valuable treasure-chest, and said that as her lord had

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interest in its safety she would place it in her sleeping chamber, and pawn her honour for its keeping. The heavy trunk was soon afterwards brought to her by the men, and under her directions it was placed within her sleeping-room. But the crafty Italian, carrying out the plot suggested by his wicked mind, had concealed *himself* within the box, and now lay awaiting the hours of darkness in order that when the Princess was fast asleep he might be enabled to glean all the particulars he required to assure Posthumus that he had succeeded in his evil design. When the hour of midnight approached, Imogen, who had been reading in bed, summoned her attendant, and asked to be aroused at the first gleam of daylight. The lady promised, and retired, leaving a taper burning.

When all was quiet and the gentle breathing of the Princess showed that she was in a deep sleep, the click of a spring was heard, the lid of the trunk was lifted noiselessly, and, in the flickering light of the taper, the white face of Iachimo appeared. For a few minutes he made a careful examination of the room, and then came out of his hiding-place, and bent over the unconscious sleeper. Her bracelet caught his eye, and with gentle touch he slowly worked it from its place and took it from her arm. He glanced at the open book and noted the page. He took in every detail of the furnishing of the room.

Just then the clock struck three, the sleeper stirred upon her pillow, and the spy crept back to the trunk. The spring clicked as he closed the lid with a firm, gentle pressure, and then profound silence reigned. Slowly the first gleams of the morning stole across the eastern sky and a tiny shaft of sunlight pierced the

curtains and lay like a golden coin upon the floor of the sleeping-chamber. There was a sound of quiet footsteps outside the door, the tuning of instruments, and presently soft music was heard in the corridor, and a rich voice sang a morning greeting to Imogen :

*“ Hark ! hark ! the lark at heaven’s gate sings,
And Phæbus ’gins arise,
His steeds to water at those springs
On chalic’d flowers that lies ;
And winking Mary-buds begin
To ope their golden eyes ;
With everything that pretty is,
My lady sweet, arise :
Arise, arise ! ”*

The musicians had been engaged by Cloten, who wished to draw the Princess from the seclusion of her own room, but the song did not have the effect he desired. He dismissed the musicians and tried what knocking at the door would do. While he was endeavouring to bribe the waiting-lady who answered, the Princess herself came forth. Cloten seized the opportunity to press his love upon her, and was repulsed with quiet, decisive words. When he persisted in spite of her protest, Imogen spoke plainly :

*“ I am much sorry, sir,
You put me to forget a lady’s manners,
By being so verbal : and learn now for all
That I, which know my heart, do here pronounce,
By the very truth of it, I care not for you,
And am so near the lack of charity,*

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*(To accuse myself), I hate you ; which I had rather
You felt than make't my boast."*

Cloten replied, in the worst possible way, by reviling the absent Posthumus, calling him a base wretch, one bred of alms and fostered with cold dishes and scraps of the Court, and declaring that a marriage with so base-born a slave was no contract at all, and therefore that Imogen was only a wife in imagination. He swore to be revenged, and it seemed that now his love for Imogen had turned to hate. The Princess had missed her bracelet, and this concerned her far more than the angry vapourings of the clownish Cloten. She ordered Pisanio to search for it, for she said that she would not lose it for the revenue of a king. Meanwhile, the Italian was enduring his imprisonment in the trunk, awaiting with considerable apprehension and much discomfort the coming of his men. When the Princess saw the heavy trunk being carried away, she little thought that within it lay a wicked plotter whose lying tongue would shatter her happiness, and destroy in the mind of her husband that faith which is the dearest bond between loving hearts.

Iachimo reached Rome in safety, and sped with haste to the house of Philario. He had been defeated, but he meant to secure the diamond by lying, and had concocted a very plausible tale. Philario was a shrewd old man, and more than once suggested to Posthumus during the telling of the story that appearances might be against the Princess and yet all the while her truth and purity be unsullied, but the studied words and seeming good faith of Iachimo impressed him unduly, and he leaped to the conclusion that his wife was

perjured and dishonest. The Italian described the room with careful exactness :

*“ It was hang’d
With tapestry of silk and silver ; the story
Proud Cleopatra, when she met her Roman,
And Cydnus swell’d above the banks, or for
The press of boats or pride : a piece of work
So bravely done, so rich, that it did strive
In workmanship, and value ; which I wonder’d
Could be so rarely and exactly wrought.
The chimney
Is south the chamber ; and the chimney-piece,
Chaste Dian bathing ; never saw I figures
So likely to report themselves : the cutter
Was as another nature, dumb ; outwent her,
Motion and breath left out.
The roof o’ the chamber
With golden cherubins is fretted : her andirons
(I had forgot them) were two winking Cupids
Of silver, each on one foot standing, nicely
Depending on their brands.”*

The final proof Iachimo led up to with deliberate cunning, and when he drew the bracelet from his pouch and laid it before Posthumus, the impetuous Briton felt that the horrible story was true. He flung down the ring and left the room and straightway wrote a bitter letter to Pisanio, proclaiming the unfaithfulness of Imogen, and commanding him to take her to some solitary place and there kill her for her sinfulness. At the same time he wrote to the Princess telling her that he had left Rome, and had arrived in Cambria, where he

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awaited her coming with loving impatience. Posthumus knew that a Roman army was on the point of leaving for Britain, and he determined to lose all thought of his disgrace and despair in the stormy tumults of the battlefield.

Wild with delight, Imogen read a portion of her letter to Pisanio. "Justice, and your father's wrath, should he take me in his dominion, could not be so cruel to me, as you, O the dearest of creatures, would even renew me with your eyes. Take notice that I am in Cambria, at Milford Haven: what your own love will out of this advise you, follow. So he wishes you all happiness, that remains loyal to his vow, and your, increasing in love,

Leonatus Posthumus."

Pisanio tried to hide his dismay when he perceived the eagerness of the Princess and her desire to leave at once for Milford Haven. He knew that the letter which gave her so much delight was only a decoy to lure her into a wild, mountainous country where Posthumus knew that it would be easy for her servant to slay her. Pisanio's whole nature recoiled from an act so cruel and treacherous. But Imogen, in her delight at the thought of meeting her husband, would admit of no delay. She said that she would announce that for some days an illness would keep her in her chamber, and ordered Pisanio to procure her a plain riding suit, such as a farmer's wife would wear upon a journey, and told him to get the horses ready in order that they might slip away on the first favourable opportunity. This was happily accomplished, and Pisanio took with him, in the cloak-

bag slung behind the saddle, the complete dress of a page.

When they reached the wild country of the Cambrians, beyond the Severn, the way became difficult, and, learning from Pisanio that they were now near Milford Haven, the Princess agreed to leave the horses and perform the journey over the mountain on foot. Pisanio was ill at ease. As the way grew darker and more solitary the thought of what was expected from him filled his heart with dread, and the bright, trustful face of his dear innocent mistress added to his mental torment. At length he could bear the strain no longer. He drew the fatal letter from his wallet and handed it in silence to Imogen. She recognised the handwriting of her husband, and read the awful accusation of her own dishonour with staring eyes and crimsoned face. "I speak not out of weak surmises," wrote Posthumus, "but from proof as strong as my grief, and as certain as I expect my revenge. That part, thou, Pisanio, must act for me, if thy faith be not tainted with the breach of hers. Let thine own hands take away her life: I shall give thee opportunity at Milford Haven: she hath my letter for the purpose: where, if thou fear to strike, and to make me certain it is done, thou art the pandar to her dishonour, and equally to me disloyal." As Imogen realised the full, deadly purport of the writing, the letter fell from her hand, and she burst into a passion of sobs and tears. Pisanio looked at her with intense sorrow, and said:

*"What shall I need to draw my sword? the paper
Hath cut her throat already. No, 'tis slander;
Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue*

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*Outvenoms all the worms of Nile ; whose breath
Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie
All corners of the world : kings, queens, and states,
Maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave
This viperous slander enters."*

When the first storm of her grief had passed, Imogen begged him to carry out his instructions, and called upon him to drive his weapon through her heart. But he threw his sword from him, and tried to comfort her by saying that some villain had struck at her good name, some enemy whose vile purpose ought to be discovered and exposed to the general execration of all honest men. He swore that he would lay no hand upon her, but that he would despatch a message to Posthumus to say that Imogen was dead, forwarding at the same time some bloodstained fragment of a garment as witness of the deed. He told her to disguise herself in the dress of a page, giving her the clothes he had brought in his cloak-bag, and advised her to try to enter the service of Caius Lucius, the Roman leader. He himself would return to King Cymbeline and make what excuse he could for her absence, promising at the same time to send her what money she might need. Before he departed he gave Imogen the jewelled box which contained the Queen's remedy for sickness, and advised her to take some when she felt weak or weary. With a sad heart he bade farewell and plunged down the mountain-side, and the Princess was left to the loneliness of the savage place and the sad musings of her own broken heart.

Meanwhile the Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, had sent an embassy to the Court of King Cymbeline

to demand the payment of a yearly tribute of three thousand pounds, which the British king had of late neglected to pay. It had been imposed by Julius Caesar upon Cassibelan. The Queen and Cloten, though wicked and heartless, were intensely patriotic, and they encouraged the King in the stand he was making against the Roman power.

“Come,” said Cloten in his blunt fashion, while the Roman officers stood by, “there’s no more tribute to be paid. Our kingdom is stronger than it was at that time; and, as I said, there is no more such Caesars: other of them may have crooked noses, but to owe such straight arms, none. We have yet many among us can gripe as hard as Cassibelan: I do not say I am one; but I have a hand.—Why tribute? Why should we pay tribute? If Caesar can hide the sun from us with a blanket, or put the moon in his pocket, we will pay him tribute for light; else, sir, no more tribute, pray you now.”

The Queen also reminded Cymbeline of the strength of the wind-swept island of which his kingdom formed a part.

“Remember, sir, my liege,
The kings your ancestors, together with
The natural bravery of your isle, which stands
As Neptune’s park, ribbed and paled in
With rocks unscaleable, and roaring waters,
With sands that will not bear your enemies’ boats,
But suck them up to the topmast. A kind of conquest
Caesar made here; but made not here his brag
Of “Came, and saw, and overcame”: with shame
(The first that ever touch’d him) he was carried

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*From off our coast, twice beaten ; and his shipping
(Poor ignorant baubles !) on our terrible seas,
Like egg-shells moved upon their surges, crack'd
As easily 'gainst our rocks : for joy whereof
The famed Cassibelan, who was once at point
(O giglot fortune !) to master Caesar's sword,
Made Lud's town with rejoicing fires bright
And Britons strut with courage."*

These brave words stirred the Icenians who stood around, and when Caius Lucius left under safe conduct for Milford Haven all knew that war would soon be declared between Rome and Britain.

Pisanio had now returned, and found that much anxious search was being made for the missing Princess. When Cloten saw him, he demanded, at the sword's point, where he had hidden the lady. Pisanio replied by showing him the letter from Posthumus which appointed Milford Haven as the meeting-place. Immediately the dull brain of Cloten conceived what seemed to him a very clever plot. It was to disguise himself in the clothes which Posthumus had worn before he left the Court of Cymbeline (Pisanio knew where they were kept) and to follow Imogen in the guise of her husband, obtaining an interview and then wreaking his vengeance upon her. Springing upon a horse, and unattended, the hasty fool rode away and set off towards the Severn and to the mountains of Wales. He little thought what evil fortune would attend his enterprise nor how much the garments of Posthumus would cost him.

All this while the hapless Imogen, disguised as a page, was wandering amid the forests which clothed

the mountains near Milford Haven. When darkness came on she sought a shelter in the bushes, and slept upon the ground. In the morning she tried to find some food, and stumbled heavily and wearily along. At length she came to a rugged defile, overhung with thick trees, and peering anxiously around discovered the entrance to a cave. She was faint with hunger and fatigue, and knew that she would perish if she could not obtain a resting place. But the dark, frowning entrance to the cavern terrified her, and for a time she dared not advance. It might be a place where robbers lurked, or the den of wild beasts. She looked about, now advancing, and again retreating in fear.

A well-worn footpath led to the cave, and Imogen tried to guess what use the secret place had been put to.

“ *What is this ?*

Here is a path to 't : 'tis some savage hold :

I were best not call ; I dare not call : yet famine,

Ere clean it o'erthrow nature, makes it valiant.

Plenty, and peace breeds cowards ; hardness ever

Of hardiness is mother.—Ho ! who's here ?

If anything that's civil, speak ; if savage,

Take, or lend.—Ho !—No answer ? then, I'll enter.

Best draw my sword ; and if mine enemy

But fear the sword like me, he'll scarcely look on't.

Such a foe, good heavens ! ”

And so she forced herself to enter, and found to her joy that the cave was empty. But it had not long been untenanted, for a few hours before an old man and two stalwart youths, who called themselves his sons, had gone away on a hunting expedition among the

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mountains. The poor Princess drew her wearied limbs towards a dark corner of the cavern, and there flung herself upon a bed of leaves and sobbed herself to sleep. She was lonely, unhappy, hungry, and tired, a homeless, forsaken outcast.

The name of the old man was Belarius, although he now bore the Welsh name of Morgan, and the two young men were called Polydore and Cadwal. The woman the boys once called mother was buried not far from the cavern, and for more than twenty years the three had dwelt in this secluded, savage place. But Belarius had formerly held high office under King Cymbeline, and he it was, in anger because of an unjust banishment, who had stolen the two infant Princes Guiderius and Arviragus from the royal nursery and had hidden them in the mountain fastness near Milford Haven. The boys never suspected that they were of royal birth, and thought that the old hunter was their father, and so through all the years they had lived in the cave, seeing few passers-by and spending their time in hunting. But they had often felt that their lives were narrow and monotonous, and longed for a wider and more stirring field than that which was offered by the wilderness.

The three had been together partaking of a frugal meal before setting out to the chase. Guiderius said :

*“ Haply this life is best
If quiet life be best, sweeter to you
That have a sharper known, well corresponding
With your stiff age : but unto us it is
A cell of ignorance, travelling a-bed,*



"Ho! who's here?"

*A prison for a debtor that not dares
To stride a limit."*

His brother, who was a youth of warlike, ambitious spirit, sighed, and turning to the old man, said :

*"What should we speak of
When we are old as you? when we shall hear
The rain and wind beat dark December, how
In this our pinching cave, shall we discourse
The freezing hours away? We have seen nothing :
We are beastly ; subtle as the fox for prey,
Like warlike as the wolf for what we eat :
Our valour is to chase what flies ; our cage
We make a quire, as doth the prison'd bird,
And sing our bondage freely."*

It was natural for youth to chafe against the narrow limitations of a secluded life, but the old man shook his head and, gazing dreamily into the fire, said :

*"How you speak !
Did you but know the city's usuries,
And felt them knowingly : the art o' the court,
As hard to leave as keep ; whose top to climb
Is certain falling, or so slippery that
The fear's as bad as falling : the toil o' the war,
A pain that only seems to seek out danger
I' the name of fame and honour, which dies i' the
search,
And hath as oft a slanderous epitaph
As record of fair act ; nay, many times,
Doth ill deserve by doing well ; what's worse,*

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*Must curt'sy at the censure.—O, boys ! this story
The world may read in me : my body's mark'd
With Roman swords, and my report was once
First with the best of note : Cymbeline lov'd me ;
And when a soldier was the theme, my name
Was not far off : then was I as a tree
Whose boughs did bend with fruit : but, in one
 night,
A storm, or robbery, call it what you will,
Shook down my mellow hangings, nay, my leaves,
And left me bare to weather."*

The old man's voice trembled as he recalled the days which had been, and a silence fell upon his hearers. The shadow passed, and Belarius reminded them that this was not the language of the hunter and the mountaineer, and so they gathered their weapons of the chase and went forth to feel again the joy of the man who lives in the open air, and to brave the rugged path and the keen mountain winds.

It was late when they returned, tired with healthful toil. Polydore bore a deer upon his shoulder. Cadwal busied himself in the lighting of a fire, while Belarius entered the cave. He started back with a cry of amazement, for a youthful, handsome page stood before him. The evening sun lighted up a face of radiant beauty, and the eyes of Imogen, refreshed by sleep, beamed upon the old man. She was a little afraid, but something in his face encouraged her. The stalwart youths eyed her with growing admiration.

" *Were you a woman, youth,*" exclaimed Guiderius,
 "*I should woo hard.*"

"I'll make 't my comfort he is a man," replied Arviragus. *"I'll love him as my brother!"*

They gave the wandering page a hearty welcome, learned that his name was Fidele, and soon Imogen was feeling happier than she had been for many months. Next day she said that she would rest, because her weariness had not yet gone, and when the three left her she took out the box which Pisanio had given her. She remembered that he had said that it contained a remedy for weakness, and so she took a quantity of the potent drug.

Hardly had the footsteps of her friends died away than a delightful languor stole over her. She lay back on her couch. Her eyes closed, and her breathing became so gentle that even a close observer could not have perceived that she was alive. Her body lost its warmth, and soon she lay like one who was dead. She did not hear a struggle which took place outside the cave. The wicked Cloten had reached the spot described by Pisanio as the meeting-place of Posthumus and his wife, and, leaving his horse, he had clambered to the thicket which concealed the entrance to the cavern. He meant to slay the husband and illtreat the wife, and so he crept stealthily, sword in hand, to where he heard voices. He heard the silvery tones of Imogen bidding farewell to some one, and his cruel heart bounded at the prospect of a speedy triumph. He shrank back as three men stepped into the path, but came forward when he saw that he was discovered.

"I cannot find those runagates," he said, with an angry frown.

"'Tis Cloten, the Queen's son," muttered Belarius,

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who knew the sullen face. "I fear some ambush. We are held as outlaws. Hence!" he whispered to the young men, pointing to the mountain path.

"Nay," replied Guiderius. "He is but one, you and my brother search what companies are near. Away, let me alone with him."

The two men glided away, and Guiderius advanced upon Cloten, who came sword in hand to meet him. A few words only passed between them, there was a clash of steel, and Cloten was slain. Guiderius struck off his head and was holding it in triumph when his companions returned. Belarius was dismayed, for he knew that the action would call down the vengeance of Cymbeline and the Queen; but a cry from Arviragus, who had gone into the cavern, alarmed him. The next instant the young man staggered out, bearing the body of Imogen in his arms. His bitter lamentations were shared by Belarius and Guiderius, and they stood beside the lifeless form speechless with dismay and sorrow. They thought that she was dead, and Arviragus said:

*"With fairest flowers,
Whilst summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,
I'll sweeten thy sad grave: thou shalt not lack
The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose, nor
The azured hare-bell, like thy veins; no, nor
The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander,
Out-sweetened not thy breath: the ruddock would,
With charitable bill (O bill, sore shaming
Those rich-left heirs that let their fathers lie
Without a monument!) bring thee all this;
Yea, and furr'd moss besides, when flowers are none,
To winter-ground thy corse."*

They laid her gently upon a bank of leaves, and while they sang a farewell song Belarius went to bring the body of Cloten (whose head had been flung into a stream); for, as the old man said :

*“ He was a queen’s son, boys :
And though he came our enemy, remember
He was paid for that : though mean and mighty,
rotting
Together, have one dust, yet reverence
(That angel of the world) doth make distinction
Of place ’tween high and low. Our foe was princely ;
And though you took his life as being our foe,
Yet bury him as a prince.”*

With these words he went to bring the body of Cloten, and meantime Guiderius and Arviragus sang their farewell dirge, while tears rolled down their cheeks as they gazed upon the still, white form before them.

*“ Fear no more the heat o’ the sun,
Nor the furious winter’s rages ;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta’en thy wages :
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.*

*“ Fear no more the frown o’ the great ;
Thou art past the tyrant’s stroke ;
Care no more to clothe and eat ;
To thee the reed is as the oak :
The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.*

*“ Fear no more the lightning flash,
Nor the all-dreaded thunder's tone ;
Fear not slander, censure rash ;
Thou hast finish'd joy and moan :
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee and come to dust.*

*“ No exorciser harm thee !
Nor no witchcraft charm thee !
Ghost unlaid forbear thee !
Nothing ill come near thee !
Quiet consummation have ;
And renowned be thy grave ! ”*

A heavy step broke the silence that followed the dirge, and Belarius entered and laid the body of Cloten beside the corse of Imogen. As he did so a trumpet sounded among the hills and there came the sound of marching feet. Words of command were heard and the sun glinted upon the spears and armour of a great company of Roman soldiers. The startled men looked up and saw, close upon them, Caius Lucius advancing at the head of his legions. Casting a hasty glance of farewell, the three Britons darted into the thicket and hurried away.

A few minutes later Imogen began to revive. A gentle flush stole into her cheeks. Her bosom rose and fell, and she began to murmur some dreaming words about the toilsomeness of her journey. Then she sat up and slowly looked around. Her eyes fell upon the headless body beside her, and in an instant she recognised the well-known garments of her husband Posthumus. She stared in horror, and then what she thought to be the

meaning of the tragedy rushed to her mind. Posthumus had been slain by Cloten and Pisanio, and the villains had laid the dead body beside his sleeping wife. She screamed and fell across the mutilated form and for a time knew no more. When she revived she saw a Roman officer standing over her. He addressed her with gentle, pitying words, and, thinking that she was a young page who was mourning the death of her master, he comforted her ; and when the soldiers had buried the body, Caius Lucius led Fidele away, to become his own page. He took her to the Roman camp and by his kindness strove to make her forget the master she had served so faithfully. When Belarius and his sons returned they discovered the new-made grave, and left the cave for ever, having determined to seek service in the armies of the Britons, now gathering to repel the Roman invader.

King Cymbeline at this time was feeling the stress of many difficulties, for shortly after the disappearance of Cloten the Queen had fallen ill of a mortal sickness, and now lay tossing in the delirium of fever. News came that a powerful army, led by Caius Lucius, had landed in Wales and was preparing to march to the heart of the country. Posthumus had come over with the Romans, but when the bloodstained kerchief, which told the story of the death of Imogen by the hand of Pisanio, had reached him, he had lost all heart. He would not fight upon the side of Rome, and left the camp and disguised himself in the rough garments of a peasant and wandered out to join the British army.

Iachimo, the subtle Italian whose lies had blighted the name of Imogen and led to so much sorrow, was captain of a legion, and Posthumus longed for the

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opportunity of meeting him in fight. When the armies approached each other Posthumus drew his sword and mingled with the British. In the onset which ensued he encountered Iachimo, and disarmed him after a brief struggle, but the Britons were unable to withstand the fierce charge of the veteran legionaries, and in the wild retreat which followed Posthumus was separated from his enemy. Rushing along the narrow lane, the flying Britons were stopped in their mad flight by the sight of an old white-bearded man, who stood side by side with two stalwart fair-haired youths. Whirling his sword over his head, the old soldier cried aloud and rallied the retreating islanders. The Romans paused in the pursuit ; in an instant the tide of retreat was stemmed, and like a torrent the Britons hurled themselves upon their foes. King Cymbeline, who had been taken by the Romans, was rescued by the old man and his sons, and Posthumus, carried away by his enthusiasm, dashed into the fray and fought beside them. Screams, shouts, the clashing of weapons upon helmet and shield, the groans of the wounded and the roaring of war-horns filled the air with a tumult of confusion, but nothing could stand against the desperate valour of the four British heroes, and finally the Romans broke and fled before a headlong charge of the Icenian warriors. Caius Lucius, his page, and many captives were taken, and before the night fell King Cymbeline had routed all his enemies with a fearful slaughter.

Posthumus had flung away his sword, and was resting near a hedge, when some British captains dashed up to him. They had not seen him in the fight.

“Who art thou?” cried one, laying a rough hand upon his shoulder.

"A Roman," said Posthumus, "who had not now been dropping here, if seconds had answered him."

"Lay hands on him, the dog! Bring him to the King," roared out the captain. The soldiers seized him and Posthumus was flung into prison. He did not care, for he wanted to die, and as death had not come to him in the battle, he had said that he was a Roman in the hope that the Britons would kill him where he stood.

His heart was broken because of his harshness to Imogen, and now he bitterly repented the angry folly which had made him order her death. He felt himself to be her murderer, and longed for death to end his broken, wasted life. But in the prison that night he dreamed a dream which cheered his heart, and when he awaked he saw a paper on the ground, which had these words written upon the page: "Whenas a lion's whelp shall, to himself unknown, without seeking find, and be embraced by a piece of tender air; and when from a stately cedar shall be lopped branches, which, being dead many years, shall after revive, be jointed to the old stock and freshly grow, then shall Posthumus end his miseries, Britain be fortunate and flourish in peace and plenty."

"Madness!" muttered the prisoner to himself, as he strove to find the meaning of the writing. "'Tis still a dream, or else such stuff as madmen tongue, and brain not."

He was aroused by the coming of the gaoler, who bade him make ready for death; the hangman, he said, was waiting for his victim, and an unknown way of darkness was before the fated captive. "I know the way I must go," said Posthumus, as he arose from his pallet of straw.

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“Your death has eyes in’s head, then; I have not seen him so pictured: you must either be directed by some that take upon them to know, or take upon yourself that which I am sure you do not know, or jump the after-inquiry on your own peril: and how you shall speed in your journey’s end, I think you’ll never return to tell one.”

“I tell thee, fellow,” said Posthumus, with a smile, “there are none want eyes to direct them the way I am going, but such as wink and will not use them.”

With these words he followed the gaoler and was led away to join a group of prisoners who were waiting to be escorted to the tent of King Cymbeline. Among them were Caius Lucius, Iachimo, and the page-boy Fidele. Posthumus did not lift his eyes, and thus in sad procession they were led into the presence of the victor. King Cymbeline had just received the heavy tidings of the death of his Queen, but heavier still was the word which Cornelius the physician gave him concerning her bitter hatred of the Princess, and her false conduct to the King. She had died despairing and in utter misery, but had confessed at the last that she had never loved the King and would have destroyed him with poison.

Caius Lucius was a true and valiant Roman. He entered the tent with a high and haughty mien and refused to sue for any favour for himself, but, glancing at his page Fidele, he begged the King to show the lad some clemency.

*“This one thing only
I will entreat: my boy, a Briton born,
Let him be ransomed: never master had*

*A page so kind, so duteous, diligent,
So tender over his occasions, true,
So feat, so nurse-like. Let his virtue join
With my request, which, I'll make bold your
highness
Cannot deny : he hath done no Briton harm,
Though he have serv'd a Roman. Save him, sir,
And spare no blood beside."*

The boy was brought forward, and the King bent a sharp gaze upon him. He thought his features were familiar, but Fidele had no eyes for any save the infamous Iachimo, for upon his hand she had caught the glitter of a diamond ring, her mother's, and her own gift to Posthumus. When she stepped into the light Belarius, Arviragus, and Guiderius, the three champions who had turned defeat into glorious victory, started with surprise.

"Is not this boy revived from death?" whispered Belarius to his sons.

"One sand another not more resembles that sweet rosy lad who died, and was Fidele.—What think you, Guiderius?" said Arviragus.

"The same dead thing alive," was the reply.

"A boon, O King!" exclaimed Imogen, pointing to Iachimo. "Let this gentleman say of whom he had this ring."

The despairing Posthumus lifted his eyes and saw the Italian step forward. He aroused himself and listened eagerly, for well he knew the story of the diamond ring. Then Iachimo, whose conscience had long ago been touched, confessed the full story of his treacherous plot against the good name of Imogen, and

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with what lies he had deceived her husband Posthumus. His narration was interrupted by an exceeding bitter cry, like the wail of a lost soul, and the ill-dressed peasant cried out in an agony of repentant sorrow : " O Imogen ! My queen, my life, my wife ! O Imogen, Imogen, Imogen ! " Yet he had not recognised the boy ; for, indeed, he had no thought for anything save his own harsh cruelty to his dear one.

" Peace, my lord," cried the lad, " hear more ! " Posthumus, resenting what he thought to be a foolish interruption, darted forward and struck Fidele, and the boy staggered and fell. Pisanio cried out, " It is your wife, my lord Posthumus ! " A hush fell upon all. But Imogen soon revived. All her past injuries were forgotten in the strength of her great loving forgiveness, and with a rapturous cry she flung herself upon the bosom of Posthumus. He could not realise that the wife he thought was dead was now clasped in his arms, until Pisanio explained that the bloodstained kerchief had been nothing but a device.

With heartfelt joy King Cymbeline received his daughter once again, and welcomed the banished Posthumus, whom he now restored to more than his former honours. The mention of Prince Cloten recalled to him the troubles of the former time, and a cloud came over his face when he learned from Guiderius that Cloten had been slain by him outside the cave. He ordered his soldiers to arrest the young champion, even though he had rendered such splendid service to the cause of King Cymbeline and to Britain.

" Nay," said Belarius, " hold, great King, there is something more to be said. Let his arms alone ; they were not born for bondage."



With a rapturous cry she flung herself upon the
bosom of Posthumus.

And then to the wonder of all who heard, and to the profound joy of the King, Belarius revealed the story of their birth, their abduction from the royal nursery, and their upbringing by himself in the mountain fastness.

*“ They are thine own, O King,
Here are your sons again ; and I must lose
Two of the sweet’st companions in the world.—
The benediction of these covering heavens
Fall on their heads like dew ! for they are worthy
To inlay heaven with stars.”*

King Cymbeline had felt his interest drawn out to the young men even before Belarius had revealed their identity, but his wildest hopes had not risen to the height of anticipating that the sons whose loss he had mourned for more than twenty years would one day stand before him, in all the strength and manhood of champions whose brave hearts and strong arms had brought a great victory to his people. He questioned Belarius, whose face now stood out clearly in his memory, concerning the garments they had worn, and certain marks upon their bodies. To all his inquiries the old man gave abundant answers, and Cymbeline was satisfied that Arviragus and Guiderius were indeed his sons. Thus, though he had lost his Queen and Cloten, he had gained far more in the restoration of the Princess Imogen, her husband, and the two Princes, and he was well content with his good fortune.

Imogen had suffered much bitterness of soul in the loss of her good name, the alienation of her husband, and the hardships she had endured. Her anguish of soul had once blazed into resentment, but her gentle heart

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could carry no malice, and she forgave Iachimo and those who had injured her. She crowned herself and them with the bright diadem of a full and joyous forgiveness, and remembered Caius Lucius and Belarius as her best and dearest benefactors. Thus in peace and forgiveness the sun of Fortune shone brilliantly upon a happy company, and King Cymbeline truly became "the radiant Cymbeline."

Having vindicated the heroism of his people, he made peace with Rome and promised to pay the tribute due to the Emperor, and in triumph the army prepared to march from Wales. Standing in his great war-chariot and pointing to the east, while his brave sons, the happy Posthumus and Imogen, and all the British captains stood around, King Cymbeline said :

*"Laud we the gods ;
And let our crooked smokes climb to their nostrils
From our blest altars. Publish we this peace
To all our subjects. Set we forward. Let
A Roman and a British ensign wave
Friendly together : so through Lud's town march :
And in the temple of great Jupiter
Our peace we'll ratify ; seal it with feasts.—
Set on there.—Never was a war did cease,
Ere bloody hands were wash'd, with such a peace."*

And so through the rough defiles and over the mountain roads the victorious army streamed, and all Britain acclaimed the prowess and rejoiced in the happiness of the radiant Cymbeline and his triumphant people.

King John

IN the twelfth century the King of France ruled over a comparatively small territory which lay in the centre of the country, with Amiens, Paris, and Orleans as his chief cities. The fairest and richest part of France was held by the powerful and wealthy Counts of Anjou, and they were also lords of Normandy, Maine, Brittany, Anjou, Touraine, Poitou, Aquitaine, and Auvergne. These provinces by marriage had come into the hand of Matilda, daughter of King Henry I. of England. After the death of Stephen of Blois in 1154, Matilda's son, Henry, Duke of Normandy, became King Henry II. of England. He had four sons and three daughters. The eldest son, Henry, married Margaret of France, and by his father's wish became Joint-King of England. He died without children. The second son, Richard of Poitou, known as Cœur de Lion, married Berengar of Navarre, but left no children of the marriage. The third son, Geoffrey of Brittany, married Lady Constance and left two children, Prince Arthur and Lady Eleanor. The fourth son, John, had two sons and three daughters; and the second daughter of Henry II. married King Alfonso of Castile and had one daughter, the Princess Blanche.

For many years the French possessions of King Henry II. were the cause of much strife, and there were

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constant outbreaks between him and his ambitious, turbulent sons. The young Henry, chafing at being a king only in name, made a secret alliance with King Louis, and gathering to his standard his brothers Geoffrey of Brittany and Richard of Poitou and many Knights, he made war upon his father, the King of England. He did not succeed in his attempt, and later, a bitter quarrel broke out between the brothers, because Richard refused to pay homage to young Henry for the Duchy of Aquitaine.

In the year 1183 young Henry died. Then John and Geoffrey quarrelled with Richard, and while the conflict was yet unsettled King Henry II. died, and Richard of the Lion Heart became Duke of Normandy and King of England. He was a Knight of wonderful prowess, tall, stalwart, and handsome, with fair hair and bright blue eyes. His reckless bravery impelled him to enter quarrels on the most trivial causes, and he would travel many leagues in search of adventure. He was marvellously expert in the use of weapons, and had been trained from his boyhood in all the knightly exercises of his times. It was said that only one Knight in Christendom, William of Barre, could match him in the lists. He was a great lover of music and poetry, and took delight in the lays of troubadours and minstrels. He was made Duke of Normandy at Rouen, and crowned King of England at Westminster on September 3, 1189. Although he loved fighting, he did his best to put an end to the disturbances which had long vexed the kingdoms, and conferred upon his brother John the Earldoms of Cornwall, Derby, Devon, Dorset, and Somerset, and tried to bind him to his cause by many other rich gifts.

But John had his own ambitions and was not over scrupulous, and had determined already in his own mind to become King when Richard was out of his way. He knew that the young Prince Arthur of Brittany had been named by Richard as heir to the crown, and that the lad's mother Constance was striving hard to arouse Brittany, Maine, Anjou, and Touraine to rally to the cause of her son, but the subtle mind of John was not alarmed, and he waited patiently for his opportunity.

At length Richard Lion Heart sailed to the Holy Land, where the Knights of Christendom were gathering to wrest the Holy City of Jerusalem from the hands of Saladin the Saracen, and John began to sow the seeds of discord in England. Then word came that the impetuous Richard had quarrelled with the King of France and the Duke Leopold of Austria, and that the Crusaders were on the point of returning from the East. Richard embarked in a swift galley, and sailing up the Adriatic, landed at Ragusa, intending to make a more rapid journey to England by riding, as a simple Knight, with a few followers, through Austria and Germany. But his enemy Leopold was on the watch, and Richard was seized and flung into the dungeon of a strong castle.

For many months he lay there until tidings reached his friends. But his ransom was fixed at the high sum of one hundred and fifty thousand marks, and he was also advised to surrender his Kingdom to the Emperor Henry. He did so and received it again, with the Kingdom of Burgundy, on the promise of paying homage to the Emperor and contributing a yearly rental of five thousand pounds.

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When his release was secured he hurried away, and in 1194 landed at Sandwich. Leaving his men, he hastened through the forest of Sherwood to Nottingham, where his brother John was staying with the noblemen whom he had won over to his side. On the appearance of Richard Lion Heart, John fled to France, and the King was once again crowned at Winchester, to wash out the stain of his captivity and surrender. Five years later at the Castle of Chaluz, which he was besieging because of a trifling quarrel with the Viscount of Limoges, Richard was shot in the breast by a cross-bowman, and died on the sixth day of April in the year 1199. Prince John took immediate steps to set young Arthur of Brittany aside and would have seized him, if Constance had not claimed the protection of King Philip and roused the people of Brittany, Maine, Anjou and Touraine to the defence of their young lord.

John called the chief nobles of Normandy and England together, and on the proposition of his supporter, the Archbishop of Canterbury, that the Crown of England is an elective one, was chosen as the fittest candidate and representative of the House of Plantagenet, and crowned with the gilt coronet of Normandy by Hugh of Avalon on Easter Day, and a few weeks later, on May 27, Ascension Day, also received the Crown of England.

But now the fires of excitement blazed in France and Germany, and Philip of France and Leopold of Austria determined, for their own purposes, to support the cause of Arthur of Brittany. The aged Queen Eleanor, widow of Henry II., supported her son John. King Philip sent the Duke of Chatillon as ambassador to England. He rode to Northampton, where King John was staying, and craved an audience with him. The

King, Queen Eleanor his mother ; William the Marshal, Earl of Pembroke ; Geoffrey Fitz-Peter, Earl of Essex ; and William Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, entered the room of state in the palace, and heard Chatillon deliver his message :

*“ Thus, after greeting, speaks the King of France
In my behaviour to the majesty,
The borrow’d majesty of England here.
Philip of France, in right and true behalf
Of thy deceased brother Geoffrey’s son,
Arthur Plantagenet, lays most lawful claim
To this fair island and the territories,
To Ireland, Poitiers, Anjou, Touraine, Maine,
Desiring thee to lay aside the sword
Which sways usurpingly these several titles,
And put the same into young Arthur’s hand,
Thy nephew and right royal sovereign.”*

As Chatillon paused, the hands of the fierce nobles around the King closed about the handles of their swords, but King John in a calm and measured tone asked what would follow if he refused to accede to the demand of France. “The proud control of fierce and bloody war,” was the ready reply, “to enforce these rights so forcibly withheld. And take my King’s defiance from my mouth.”

A quiet smile swept over the handsome, subtle face of King John, and a cruel light shone in his eyes. He knew that in cunning statesmanship he was more than a match for Philip and Leopold, and he had no fear but that he would ultimately succeed in any conflict with them. He heard the defiance of Chatillon with quiet contempt, and then said :

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*" Bear mine to him, and so depart in peace.
Be thou as lightning in the eyes of France ;
For ere thou canst report I will be there,
The thunder of my cannon shall be heard.
So, hence ! Be thou the trumpet of our wrath
And sullen presage of your own decay.—
An honourable conduct let him have :
Pembroke, look to it. Farewell, Chatillon."*

As William the Marshal escorted the ambassador from the King's presence, the Sheriff of Northampton entered. He was followed by two men, who were a striking contrast to each other. One was a thin, spindle-shanked weakling, with a sharp face, a cunning eye, and a furtive manner. He rubbed his hands in a nervous kind of way, and shuffled into the room, casting a look of mingled fear and assurance as he noticed the frowning face of the King. The other was a stalwart, broad-shouldered giant, with curly, clustering fair hair, and steady blue eyes. He carried himself like a knightly champion, and his bold demeanour and laughing grace and confidence reminded Queen Eleanor of her wayward knightly son who lay buried at his father's feet in the stately old Abbey Church of Font-Evraud. King John's quick eye also observed the striking resemblance to Richard of the Lion Heart, and when the man spoke his bold resonant tones made the King imagine that the dead had come to life again. "This is perfect Richard," muttered King John, and he bent a close scrutiny upon the men, and waited to hear what they had to say.

It turned out to be a question of a disputed inheritance. The younger man, whose name was Robert Faulcon-

bridge, said that the Knight, his father, had left all his property away from the stalwart elder son Philip on the ground that Philip, although the child of Lady Faulconbridge, was not his offspring, but the baseborn son of Richard Cordelion, or Richard of the Lion Heart. But Philip was determined to possess the inheritance, so Robert had brought the matter before the King in order that justice might be done.

Queen Eleanor, whose interest was greatly aroused by the sight of Philip, had no doubt that she was looking upon a son of King Richard, and she knew that no matter what his name might be, he bore the face and form of her dead son. With a kindly glance at the young man she said : " I like thee well, wilt thou forsake thy fortune, bequeath thy land to him, and follow me ? I am a soldier, and now bound to France."

Without a moment's hesitation Philip replied, " Brother, take my land. Madam, I'll follow you unto the death."

The Queen smiled, and King John, who always knew how to win men's hearts by gracious dealings, drew his sword and bade the giant kneel. Touching him lightly upon the shoulder and giving him the accolade of Knighthood, he said : " From henceforth bear his name whose form thou bearest : kneel thou down Philip, but arise more great ; arise, Sir Richard and Plantagenet." Sir Richard arose to his feet and watched his brother Robert leave the presence of the King, and presently all withdrew, and Philip was left to himself. He was not dazzled by his sudden change of name and fortune, for he was as shrewd as he was impetuous, and was prepared to tread with vigorous footsteps the way that was opening out before him. He

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did not regret the loss of the Faulconbridge inheritance, for he felt within himself capacities which would win for him a nobler estate, and he knew that the strong common sense with which Nature had endowed him would enable him to force his way through the cunning devices of men like King John, King Philip, and Duke Leopold.

As he stood alone in the great chamber of Northampton Castle he mused upon his changed career.

From his mother's lips Philip now learned that he was indeed the son of King Richard of the Lion Heart, and despite the stigma which lay upon a baseborn child, the stalwart young Knight rejoiced to know that he had sprung from a soldier whose name stood highest in the proud ranks of the chivalry of Christendom. It was with a light heart, therefore, that he prepared to accompany King John and his Knights to France, where Philip hoped to beat out upon the helmets of doughty adversaries the music of a true knight's fame.

The conflict began around the walls of the ancient and strongly defended capital of Anjou, the city of Angiers (Angers).

King John had hurried through Normandy and Maine in order to seize the city, but to his anger he found the gates closed and barricaded against him, and the ramparts manned with determined soldiers and citizens, whose leaders refused to admit him, although at the same time there floated from the towers the standard of the King of England.

King Philip of France, the Dauphin, and Leopold of Austria had also advanced close to the gates of the city and demanded an entrance in the name of Arthur of Brittany, whom they called the heir of Richard and



Philip now learned that he was the son of King Richard. 56

rightful King of England. But they were also refused by the steadfast warders who kept the gates. The rival forces encamped beyond the walls and watched the city and each other with jealous eyes.

Meanwhile Leopold of Austria did all he could to convince Constance and Arthur that nothing would be allowed to break the compact which had been made between them. He was a statesman who loved cunning better than war, and although he was a knight of high standing he nevertheless carried within his shining armour and under his high-sounding words the heart of a craven. His share in the treacherous imprisonment of King Richard had never been forgiven in England, and he little thought that in the train of King John there was a man who was prepared to avenge the sufferings of Cœur-de-Lion with rough straight words and even straighter and sturdier blows. But Leopold did not know this, as yet, and lavished a multitude of fair words upon Arthur :

*“ Upon thy cheek lay I this zealous kiss,
As seal to this indenture of my love,
That to my home I will no more return,
Till Angiers and the right thou hast in France,
Together with that pale, that white-faced shore,
Whose foot spurns back the ocean’s roaring tides
And coops from other lands her islanders,
Even till that England, hedged in with the main,
That water-walled bulwark, still secure
And confident from foreign purposes,
Even till that utmost corner of the west
Salute thee for her king : till then, fair boy,
Will I not think of home, but follow arms.”*

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His words were echoed by King Philip, and when Chatillon, now returned from England, entered the royal pavilion and announced that King John had resolved upon war, the heart of Constance beat high with anticipated triumph, for she hated John and would rejoice in any disaster which befell him. The sharp sound of a trumpet broke in upon the conference, and presently King John, Queen Eleanor, Lady Blanche of Castile, and Sir Richard the Bastard, were seen approaching. As King John drew near he said: "Peace be to France," and King Philip returned the greeting with "Peace be to England," but when he went on to charge John with contriving mischief against his lawful King and usurping the crown of England, the passions of both sides were let loose, and a sharp controversy broke out between Queen Eleanor and Constance. Duke Leopold listened for a while and then took upon himself the office of mediator, and in a somewhat domineering voice cried out "Peace!"

"Hear the crier," said a voice, and the Duke turned with a fierce look to Sir Richard, who stood near him smiling contemptuously.

"What the devil art thou?" said he, trying to abash the Knight with his frown. The reply startled him, and drew all eyes upon the stalwart form of Sir Richard.

*"One that will play the devil, sir, with you,
An 'a may catch your hide and you alone :
You are the hare of whom the proverb goes,
Whose valour plucks dead lions by the beard :
I'll smoke your skin-coat, an I catch you right ;
Sirrah, look to 't ; i' faith, I will, i' faith."*

This was bold language to so great a Duke, and

Leopold felt the scornful words like the sting of a whip, but a glance into the face of Richard showed him that he was not likely to browbeat such an adversary. He let the insult pass, and afterwards Richard goaded him almost to madness with his jeering, telling him that if he could only catch him in his den he would set an oxhead on the lion's hide and make a monster of him. Leopold, despite his lion's name, was only a loud-voiced coward, and Richard was not afraid to tell him so.

The conference of the kings ended in the forces of France and England marching into position for battle, but before the conflict began the city was once more challenged to open its gates. The reply was as before, that Angiers owed allegiance to the King of England, and would only open its gates to the man who proved himself to be so by his victory in battle.

Then the trumpets sounded the onset, the hostile armies advanced, and soon the plain was covered with struggling soldiers. Each foot of ground was stubbornly contested and the tide of battle ebbed and flowed. King Philip and King John both claimed the victory, but the watchers on the turrets and ramparts of Angiers declared that neither side had won :

*“Heralds, from off our towers we might behold,
From first to last, the onset and retire
Of both your armies ; whose equality
By our best eyes cannot be censured :
Blood hath bought blood and blows have answered blows ;
Strength match'd with strength, and power confronted
power :
Both are alike ; and both alike we like.*

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*One must prove greatest : while they weigh so even,
We hold our town for neither, yet for both."*

The great walls and strong gates gave a measure of security to this attitude of the citizens, and the Kings prepared to renew the conflict. Sir Richard had fought with all the joyous and reckless bravery of his valiant father, and had swept across the field of battle with mighty force, beating his adversaries out of his way. He saw that both King Philip and King John were men of words rather than of swords, and that they needed the spur to force them into battle. He himself was rejoicing in the tumult, and now encouraged King John to renew it :

*" Ha, majesty ! how high thy glory towers,
When the rich blood of kings is set on fire !
O, now doth Death line his dead chaps with steel ;
The swords of soldiers are his teeth, his fangs ;
And now he feasts, mousing the flesh of men,
In undetermined differences of kings.
Why stand these royal fronts amazed thus ?
Cry ' havoc ! ' kings ; back to the stained field
You equal potents, fiery kindled spirits !
Then let confusion of one part confirm
The other's peace ; till then, blows, blood, and death ! "*

His burning words kindled his hearers to a new enthusiasm, but now Sir Richard had a suggestion to make which savoured to him of high statecraft and subtle policy. It was that both armies should unite in beating down the opposition of Angiers, and then when this was achieved and the city was helpless, that France and England should renew their conflict with

each other to decide which was the victor. The plan appeared to the leaders on both sides to be a good one, and the armies were ordered to assault the city. But the citizens saw that the end could not be far off if both armies attacked them, and their leaders suggested a compromise. It was that the young Dauphin and the Lady Blanche should be united in marriage.

*“That daughter there of Spain, the Lady Blanch,
Is niece to England : look upon the years
Of Lewis the Dauphin and that lovely maid : . . .
This union shall do more than battery can
To our fast-closed gates ; for, at this match,
With swifter spleen than powder can enforce,
The mouth of passage shall we fling wide ope,
And give you entrance : but without this match,
The sea enraged is not half so deaf,
Lions more confident, mountains and rocks
More free from motion, no, not Death himself
In mortal fury half so peremptory,
As we to keep this city.”*

It was a clever appeal, the Dauphin and the Lady Blanche were willing enough, and the King of France saw in it a way to secure large possessions for his son, while Austria realised that by it he would be set free from his compact. As for King John, the main thing with him was the fact that by subtle dealing he could get young Arthur into his power and also exert through the Lady Blanche an influence upon the future King of France. Each looked at his own interest first, and Sir Richard laughed aloud as he perceived how the lure was attracting them. He saw far more clearly than any one how the matter would turn out, and he felt a

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scorn for the weakness and duplicity of King John. To gain possession of young Arthur, the King was ready to part with Anjou, Touraine, Maine, Poitiers, and the province of which Rouen was the capital; and King Philip and Duke Leopold, in order to foster and safeguard their own interests, were willing to forswear themselves and fling their compact with Constance and Arthur to the winds. They were willing to sacrifice the lad if they could gain something for themselves. Once established in the five provinces the King of France knew that he would soon be able to drive King John out of the possessions which had descended from the Counts of Anjou, and thus England would lose the fairest portion of the wide dominions of the Plantagenets. Sir Richard the Bastard saw all this clearly, but, above all, his blunt, honest disposition revolted against the callous double-dealing of the Kings and Duke Leopold.

*“ Mad world ! mad kings ! mad composition !
John, to stop Arthur's title in the whole,
Hath willingly departed with a part :
And France, whose armour conscience buckled on,
Whom zeal and charity brought to the field
As God's own soldier, rounded in the ear
With that same purpose-changer, that sly devil,
That broker, that still breaks the pate of faith,
That daily break-vow, he that wins of all,
Of kings, of beggars, old men, young men, maids,
That smooth-faced gentleman, tickling Commodity,
Commodity, the bias of the world,
The world, who of itself is peised well,
Made to run even upon even ground,*

*Till this advantage, this vile-drawing bias,
This sway of motion, this Commodity,
Makes it take head from all indifferency,
From all direction, purpose, course, intent : ”*

Sir Richard was thinking of the game of bowls, where the weight of lead placed in the bowl makes it incline to one side when it is thrown across the playing-green, and he saw that if a man desires to win the game he must know how to use the bias when he makes his throw. He continued :

*“ And why rail I on this Commodity ?
But for because he hath not woo’d me yet :
Not that I have the power to clutch my hand,
When his fair angels would salute my palm ;
But for my hand, as unattempted yet,
Like a poor beggar, raileth on the rich.
Well, whiles I am a beggar, I will rail
And say there is no sin but to be rich ;
And being rich, my virtue then shall be
To say there is no vice but beggary.
Since kings break faith upon commodity,
Gain, be my lord, for I will worship thee.”*

Sir Richard knew well that the bargain would be struck by the kings, and he was not astonished when he learned that the Lady Constance was overwhelmed with rage and despair at the tidings of this fateful marriage. She refused to obey the invitation of the kings. Throwing herself upon the ground she bade them come to her. “ Here I and sorrows sit,” she said, “ here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it.” When King Philip and King John drew near she cried out against them, uttering

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bitter reproaches, calling them perjured, forsworn and faithless. Austria tried to quiet her, but she turned upon him with fierce disdain and called him villain, slave, coward, a cold-blooded perjurer, little valiant and ever striving to ally himself with the strong. "Thou wear a lion's hide!" she said, "doff it for shame, and hang a calf-skin on those recreant limbs."

Duke Leopold grew white with rage as he was thus compelled to bear the lash of a woman's tongue, and stung by her scorn he shouted, "O, that a man should speak those words to me!" He was answered on the instant by a voice he was now learning to dread as well as to hate. The deep tones of Sir Richard growled out, "And hang a calf-skin on those recreant limbs."

"Thou darest not say so, villain, for thy life," hissed the Duke, trembling with rage, and clutching his dagger. Again, like the sound of a funeral bell, the insulting phrase was repeated. "And hang a calf-skin on those recreant limbs," and Sir Richard strode forward and looked with steady frowning face upon the angry Duke. At this moment a stately figure was seen coming in the direction of the kings. It was Pandulph, Cardinal of Milan, who had been sent from Rome to demand from King John the reason why Stephen Langton, nominated to the Archbishopric of Canterbury by Pope Innocent, had been refused by John. The Legate was a proud man of dignified bearing, and as he spoke to the King a silence fell upon all. In cold measured tones Pandulph delivered his message. But King John faced him and a smile of derision curled his lips as he called the Pope a meddling priest, and said :

*“What earthy name to interrogatories
Can task the free breath of a sacred king?
Thou canst not, cardinal, devise a name
So slight, unworthy and ridiculous,
To charge me to an answer, as the pope.
Tell him this tale; and from the mouth of England
Add thus much more, that no Italian priest
Shall tithe or toll in our dominions;
But as we, under heaven, are supreme head,
So under Him that great supremacy,
Where we do reign, we will alone uphold,
Without the assistance of a mortal hand:
So tell the pope, all reverence set apart
To him and his usurp'd authority.”*

This bold defiance awed the standers-by, and even King John himself trembled within his heart. The Legate drew himself up to his full height, and, raising the Cross, pointed to the King. There was a long, almost breathless pause, and then slowly and solemnly Pandulph said :

*“Then, by the lawful power that I have,
Thou shall stand cursed and excommunicate :
And blessed shall he be that doth revolt
From his allegiance to an heretic ;
And meritorious shall that hand be call'd,
Canonized and worshipp'd as a saint,
That takes away by any secret course
Thy hateful life.”*

When these words had been spoken every man except Sir Richard fell away from King John, and he was left a solitary figure, under the awful curse and

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excommunication of the mighty power of Rome. All allegiance to him was by it dissolved, he and his country lay under the ban, no man might serve him, no priest give him religious consolation, his subjects were absolved from obedience, and any man might slay him as a wild and dangerous beast. Austria dared not resist, and King Philip hesitated to break the alliance which had been made until the Legate, noting his indecision, plainly told him that if he stood by King John he and all France would be involved in the threatened curse. He summoned him to fight for the Church, and said :

*"Therefore to arms ! be champion of our church,
Or let the church, our mother, breathe her curse,
A mother's curse, on her revolting son.
France, thou mayest hold a serpent by the tongue,
A chafed lion by the mortal paw,
A fasting tiger safer by the tooth,
Than keep in peace that hand which thou dost hold."*

The Dauphin, however, held to his marriage contract with the Lady Blanche, though even she had been turned from the side of John by the strong denunciation of Pandulph in the name of the Pope. Still the excommunicated King did not waver in his resolution. At his command Sir Richard hurried from the pavilion, and the trumpets were heard summoning the English to the attack. The French also advanced to engage them, and soon the plain was the scene of a desperate conflict. Sir Richard fought his way to the side of Duke Leopold of Austria and struck him from his horse with a mighty blow, and with a cry of triumph beheaded him with his sword. Young Arthur was captured by

Hubert de Burgh, and Constance fled from the field in terror and dismay.

The English soldiers now swept the French before them, and King John gave orders to march to the coast. But he laid strict commands upon Hubert to guard his prisoner securely. "He is a serpent in my way," he said, "and wheresoe'er this foot of mine doth tread, he lies before me : dost thou understand me ? Thou art his keeper."

"And I'll keep him so that he shall not offend your majesty," replied Hubert.

The King drew near and whispered the words "Death, —the grave," and Hubert knew that the life of young Arthur was doomed. He hurried with his captive to Calais, crossed to England by a swift galley, and Arthur was imprisoned in a strong castle. Meanwhile Constance, his mother, with a few faithful retainers, sought for him over the battlefield, and when she learned that King John had taken him her mind almost gave way in the tempest of her terrible grief. She tore her hair, and wandered, half mad, until she came into the presence of the Cardinal and King Philip, and flung herself at the feet of the Legate. Her hair floated wildly about her shoulders, and her face was convulsed with grief as she cried :

*"O that these hands could so redeem my son,
As they have given these hairs their liberty !
But now I envy at their liberty,
And will again commit them to their bonds,
Because my poor child is a prisoner.
And, father cardinal, I have heard you say
That we shall see and know our friends in heaven :*

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*If that be true, I shall see my boy again ;
For since the birth of Cain, the first male child,
To him that did but yesterday suspire,
There was not such a gracious creature born.
But now will canker sorrow eat my bud
And chase the native beauty from his cheek
And he will look as hollow as a ghost,
As dim and meagre as an ague's fit,
And so he'll die ; and, rising so again,
When I shall meet him in the court of Heaven
I shall not know him : therefore never, never
Must I behold my pretty Arthure more."*

Her sorrow was so extravagant in its expression that both King and Cardinal thought that she was going beyond the bounds of sincerity, and Philip said plainly that she was as fond of grief as she was of her child. But she replied :

*"Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form ;
Then have I reason to be fond of grief.
Fare you well : had you such loss as I,
I could give better comfort than you do.
I will not keep this form upon my head,
When there is such disorder in my wit.
O Lord ! my boy, my Arthure, my fair son !
My life, my joy, my food, my all the world !
My widow-comfort, and my sorrows' cure !"*

As she turned away her loud wailing cries struck hard upon the awakened consciences of the men whose broken



He laid strict commands upon Hubert to guard his prisoner.

faith had brought these sorrows upon her, and the Dauphin felt himself to be disgraced and shamed. As his father hurried after Constance, Lewis muttered to himself :

*“ There’s nothing in this world can make me joy :
Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale
Vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man ;
And bitter shame hath spoil’d the sweet world’s taste,
That it yields nought but shame and bitterness.”*

But Cardinal Pandulph tried to arouse his ambition by showing what would soon happen to King John if Arthur’s life were taken. The Dauphin would then be able to claim all the possessions of the young Duke of Brittany, and the English people, already shaken in their allegiance, would execrate the excommunicated tyrant as an accursed murderer. John would soon be swept from the throne he had disgraced, and who more likely to succeed him than the ambitious French Prince who had already secured the possessions of the Lady Blanche, and had behind him the assistance of the Empire, France, and Castile ? The eloquent wisdom of the wily prelate prevailed, and word was sent throughout France that the Dauphin was about to lead a powerful army against all the territories of Normandy and England, that he would beat down the fortresses in France which professed to serve King John, and finally sail to England to ravage Kent and Surrey, and hold London. According to the play a great array soon afterwards landed on the shores of England, and, brushing aside the opposition on the coasts, the Dauphin took possession of all the county of Kent, with the exception of Dover Castle, and then

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pushed on for London, where he was well received, finally establishing a great camp at Saint Edmundsbury. From Bury he sent out messengers to the great lords inviting them to join him in his struggle against King John, and soon an awful event drove many adherents to his standard. Chief among these were Earl Salisbury, Earl Pembroke, and Lord Bigot, powerful nobles with many retainers, who had for some time slackened in their allegiance to King John.

In a strong castle with massive gates and walls, young Arthur of Brittany had been kept a close prisoner by Hubert de Burgh.

He was not chained, nor had he been thrown into a dungeon, but his room was secluded and high up, and every day Hubert kept a vigilant watch upon him. The quiet patience of the lad appealed to the rough noble who was his custodian, and many an hour was spent by the two in converse over the stirring events which were agitating France and England. So Hubert grew fond of his captive and called him his "little Prince." Once when Hubert could not sleep because of a fever which gave him a violent headache, Arthur nursed him through the night with loving care, holding a wetted handkerchief to his hot brow and soothing him with gentle sympathy, cheering and brightening the dark hours with the tender ministrations of a generous heart. And so their affections became entwined, and the young Prince loved the rough soldier, and Hubert on his side felt like a father to the lad. But all the while a cloud of apprehension lay upon him, for he knew that the cruelty of King John would one day go out against the life of the boy. His forebodings were soon realised. A messenger came spurring to the

castle with a letter from the King. It was before the time of the French invasion, and Hubert read its message with a pale face and a sad heart. It was an order from King John that the eyes of Arthur should be put out with red hot irons. Hubert summoned two men, a brazier was placed in the anteroom, and the awful instruments of torture were thrust into the glowing embers. Then it was arranged that Hubert should speak with the lad until he (Hubert) stamped upon the floor, at which signal the men were to rush into the room and bind the Prince with a strong cord. With pale face and sinking heart Hubert lifted the arras and stood before Arthur.

"You are sad, Hubert," was the friendly greeting as the noble entered.

"Indeed, I have been merrier."

"Mercy on me! Methinks nobody should be sad but I. By my Christendom, so I were out of prison and kept sheep, I should be merry as the day is long. Are you sick, Hubert? You look pale to-day."

Avoiding his solicitous looks, Hubert held out the letter he had received, and told the Prince to read. He read the note and realised the meaning of the fatal message with wild, staring eyes, and the paper dropped from his nerveless fingers and fluttered to the ground.

In wondering, amazed tones the poor boy said: "Will you put out mine eyes? These eyes that never did nor never shall so much as frown on you."

"I have sworn to do it; and with hot irons must I burn them out."

"And if an angel should have come to me and told me Hubert should put out mine eyes, I would not have believed him—no tongue but Hubert's."

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As the Prince uttered these words Hubert stamped, and two rough-looking soldiers, carrying cords and irons, dragged aside the curtains and advanced towards the terrified boy. He screamed in affright and ran behind Hubert, crying, "O save me, Hubert, save me! My eyes are out even with the fierce looks of these bloody men."

"Bind him," said Hubert, and they seized the shrinking, helpless captive.

"Alas, what need you be so boisterous rough," he moaned, "I will not struggle, I will stand stone-still. For Heaven's sake, Hubert, let me not be bound! Nay, hear me, Hubert, drive these men away, and I will sit as quiet as a lamb; I will not stir, nor wince, nor speak a word, nor look upon the iron angrily: thrust but these men away, and I'll forgive you, whatever torment you do put me to."

In his agony he clung to Hubert, his eyes filling with tears, and his breath coming in quick pants. The soldier's heart was filled with pity, and yet the King's command was urgent. But he sent the men away. "I am best pleased to be from such a deed," muttered one of the men as he dropped the heavy curtain behind him and hurried away lest he should hear the screams of the tortured child. There was a long pause. Neither Hubert nor Arthur could speak. The coals in the brazier were beginning to lose their glow, and the irons were growing cold. With an effort Hubert aroused himself and plunged the iron into the heart of the fire. As it grew hot he said in a hoarse whisper:

"Come, boy, prepare yourself. There is no remedy but to lose your eyes."

“ O heaven, that there were but a mote in yours, a grain, a dust, a gnat, a wandering hair, any annoyance in that precious sense ! Then, feeling what small things are boisterous there, your vile intent must needs seem horrible.”

Hubert felt the strain to be almost beyond endurance, but he shouted : “ Is this your promise ? Go to, hold your tongue.”

*“ Hubert, the utterance of a brace of tongues
Must needs want pleading for a pair of eyes :
Let me not hold my tongue, let me not, Hubert ;
Or, Hubert, if you will, cut out my tongue,
So I may keep mine eyes : O, spare mine eyes,
Though to no use but still to look on you !
Lo, by my troth, the instrument is cold
And would not harm me.
No, in good sooth ; the fire is dead with grief,
Being create for comfort, to be used
In undeserved extremes : see else yourself ;
There is no malice in this burning coal ;
The breath of heaven hath blown his spirit out
And strew'd repentant ashes on his head.
An' if you do revive it, you will but make it blush
And glow with shame of your proceedings, Hubert :
Nay, it perchance will sparkle in your eyes ;
And like a dog that is compell'd to fight,
Snatch at his master that doth tarre him on.
All things that you should use to do me wrong
Deny their office : only you do lack
That mercy which fierce fire and iron extends,
Creatures of note for mercy-lacking uses.”*

He lifted up his face to Hubert as though in earnest

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prayer, and the soldier cast the iron from him, and took the lad in his arms, promising that he would not harm him for all the wealth in the coffers of King John. But well he knew that the cunning King had set spies on the watch to report what had been done, and Hubert determined to send a false message saying that Prince Arthur was dead.

Meanwhile the King was in his palace, and Pembroke, Salisbury, and other nobles stood around. The King was in high spirits, because he had once again been crowned, and he was feeling that the curse of Rome was sitting lightly upon his shoulders. The men who stood before him were wavering and unsure in their faith, for they knew his duplicity, his cowardice, his treacherous and cruel nature. As yet the news that the Dauphin had landed in England had not reached the Palace, but already a messenger was hasting to acquaint the King.

John was trying to explain the necessity of his double coronation. Pembroke said that the second ceremony was superfluous, and Salisbury exclaimed :

*“Therefore, to be possess’d with double pomp,
To guard a title that was rich before,
To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,
To smooth the ice, or add another hue
Unto the rainbow, or with taper-light
To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish,
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.”*

The King heard him with a gracious smile, and promised to be guided in his policy by the wisdom of the men he saw before him, and Pembroke then urged

the King to release Prince Arthur, because the fact of his imprisonment was moving many to discontent. Even as he spoke Hubert de Burgh entered the audience chamber and went straight to the King. Pembroke and Salisbury watched them with eager scrutiny. They suspected Hubert and feared that he was the willing instrument of the cruelty of John.

De Burgh had concocted a story of the death of the Prince, and when the King heard it his cruel heart rejoiced that at last the lad had been swept out of his way. His face was flushed with triumph, but he concealed his joy and turned to the Earls with a sad look, and in faltering tones told them that the Prince was dead. They concealed their thoughts in ambiguous phrases, but the reality of their distrust of the King was apparent in their faces, and when they left the chamber John knew that they suspected foul play, and were plotting mischief against him. He sat in moody thought, but was aroused by the entrance of a messenger, who came to deliver the fateful tidings that Queen Eleanor was dead, that the Lady Constance had died in a mad frenzy, and that the Dauphin with a great army had landed in England and was ravaging the southern counties. King John had always been greatly influenced by the wise counsel of his mother, and her death destroyed the last hope of saving the French possessions of the Plantagenets. He was cheered somewhat by the entrance of Sir Richard, who hurried into the chamber with his usual impetuosity, leading a wild-looking peasant by the hand. He said that he had captured him in the streets of Pomfret, where the man was prophesying to a crowd of citizens that before noon on Ascension Day King John would have delivered up

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his crown. The seer was sent to prison, and Sir Richard hurried away to gather the King's troops. When Hubert de Burgh returned after leading the prophet away, he also told the King that disaffection was spreading among the people, and that threats of vengeance were being freely uttered about the death of Prince Arthur. This news, coming upon the death of Queen Eleanor, still further alarmed the King, and with his usual weakness and duplicity he turned upon Hubert and upbraided him for being the cause of Arthur's murder. De Burgh pleaded his faithfulness, and said that what he had done had been by the King's command, but John replied :

*" How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
Makes deeds ill done ! Hadst not thou been by,
A fellow by the hand of nature mark'd,
Quoted and sign'd to do a deed of shame,
This murder had not come into my mind."*

De Burgh tried to explain, but the King did not allow him to proceed. Becoming more wrathful as the sense of his danger rose more clearly before him, King John went on :

*" Hadst thou but shook thy head or made a pause
When I spake darkly what I purposed,
Or turn'd an eye of doubt upon my face,
As bid me tell my tale in express words,
Deep shame had struck me dumb, made me break off,
And those thy fears might have wrought fears in me :
But thou didst understand me by my signs
And didst in signs again parley with sin ;
Yea, without stop, didst let thy heart consent,*

*And consequently thy rude hand to act
The deed, which both our tongues held vile to name.
Out of my sight, and never see me more !
My nobles leave me ; and my state is braved,
Even at my gates, with ranks of foreign powers :
Nay, in the body of this fleshly land,
This kingdom, this confine of blood and breath,
Hostility and civil tumult reigns
Between my conscience and my cousin's death."*

His remorseful rage was so sincere that Hubert felt that it would now be safe to acquaint the King that his story of the death was false. He did so, and immediately John hastened to seize what he thought would be a means of recalling his nobles to his side, and De Burgh was sent to tell the Earls of Salisbury and Pembroke that Arthur still lived. The nobles were walking in the courtyard of the Palace, and Salisbury had already vowed to leave the service of the bloodstained King. When Sir Richard drew near to request their attendance within the Court they refused to obey the summons. As they were walking towards the gates of the Castle young Arthur, dressed in the rough garments of a sailor lad, appeared on the lofty ramparts. He had made up his mind to attempt to escape, but the walls were high and he had no means of climbing down. He saw beneath him a jutting buttress, and thought that if he could but reach it he might make his way along a rough stone ledge. He leaped, but missed the buttress, and was hurled down the ledge, falling headlong upon the stones in the courtyard far below. He struck the ground with terrific force and was killed. As the Earls and Sir Richard came round

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the corner they discovered his bruised and bleeding body. They started back in dismay, and then bent over the dead lad with sorrowful, vengeful hearts. At this moment De Burgh came upon them, announcing that Prince Arthur was alive and in safe keeping. He had not perceived the body, but Salisbury drew his sword and would have run him through had not Sir Richard struck the point up.

"Who killed this Prince?" said Lord Bigot, as he confronted Hubert and pointed to the bleeding form.

"'Tis not an hour since I left him well," replied De Burgh. "I honour'd him, I loved him, and will weep my date of life out for his sweet life's loss."

But they refused to accept his word and left him, breathing out threats of vengeance against King John and his murderous accomplice. Sir Richard turned his frowning wrathful face upon De Burgh. He was accustomed to scenes of bloodshed, but what seemed to be the callous murder of the Prince aroused his deepest passion. Despite the earnest protestations and denials of Hubert he still thought him responsible for the crime, although he felt that the supreme guilt lay upon the King. He pointed to the corpse and bade Hubert carry him away :

"Go, bear him in thine arms.

*I am amazed, methinks, and lose my way
Among the thorns and dangers of this world.
How easy dost thou take all England up !
From forth this morsel of dead royalty,
The life, the right and truth of all this realm
Is fled to heaven ; and England now is left
To tug and scramble and to part by the teeth*

*The unowed interest of proud-swelling state.
Now for the bare-pick'd bone of majesty
Doth dogged war bristle his angry crest
And snarleth in the gentle eyes of peace :
Now powers from home and discontents at home
Meet in one line ; and vast confusion waits,
As doth a raven on a sick-fallen beast,
The imminent decay of wrested pomp.
Now happy he whose cloak and cincture can
Hold out this tempest. Bear away that child
And follow me with speed : I'll to the king :
A thousand businesses are brief in hand,
And heaven itself doth frown upon the land."*

Great events were marching apace in the kingdom, and King John, feeling that all would soon be lost, made an abject surrender to Pandulph the Legate, handing him the crown and receiving it again from him as a subject of the Pope, under the promise that the Legate would command the Dauphin to retire from England. But Lewis did not prove so obedient as Pandulph anticipated, and refused to order his army to retreat. Salisbury, Pembroke, and Bigot had now joined the French, and many other discontented noblemen had followed their example. Sir Richard had warned King John of the possible failure of the Legate, and the royal troops were ordered to march upon Swinstead.

When the knight entered the French camp to deliver a message from the King, he found Pandulph and the Dauphin debating what course to pursue, and was glad to add the weight of his patriotic eloquence to their discussion. He advised Lewis to hurry back to France, and upbraided Pembroke and the other Barons for their

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treachery to England. But the fiery French Prince was determined to bring the war to an issue, and ordered his men to strike up the drums. Sir Richard heard his command with an amused interest, and said :

*“ Indeed, your drums, being beaten, will cry out ;
And so shall you, being beaten : do but start
An echo with the clamour of thy drum,
And even at hand a drum is ready braced
That shall reverberate all as loud as thine ;
Sound but another, and another shall
As loud as thine rattle the welkin's ear
And mock the deep-mouth'd thunder : for at hand,
Not trusting to this halting legate here,
Whom he hath used rather for sport than need,
Is warlike John ; and in his forehead sits
A bare-ribb'd death, whose office is this day
To feast upon whole thousands of the French.”*

Sir Richard's confidence lay more in his own warlike spirit than in the strength and faithfulness of King John's army, for the story of the death of Arthur had spread rapidly through the country, and many stout men-at-arms refused to serve under the standard of a cruel, perjured King. But help came from the sturdy Wardens of the Welsh Marches, and King John, with their assistance, attacked Lynn and Lincoln and recaptured both places. Then he gave orders to march upon London. As they crossed the marshes of the Wash the baggage and treasure were swallowed in a quicksand. King John, his son Prince Henry, and several of his noblemen had narrow escapes. And here the King fell into a raging fever which caused him excruciating pain and such weakness that he had to be carried in

a litter. It was said that he was suffering from the effects of a deadly poison administered by a monk, who doubtless remembered the curse which had been laid upon King John, and the blessing promised to any one who would contrive his death. While Sir Richard and Hubert de Burgh drew up the army into position, the King was carried into Swinstead Abbey and there lay at the point of death. In one of the fierce skirmishes between the armies Lord Melun, a prominent French Lord, was slain, but before he died he confessed to Salisbury and Pembroke that the Dauphin meant to put them to death, whereupon they resolved to return to the camp of King John and crave his forgiveness. Prince Henry met them with offers of friendship, and their retainers were once more ranged beneath the standard of England.

But nothing could stay the progress of the malady or poison which was destroying the life of King John, and he began to rave and cry out as though in fearful torture. His lips were parched and dry, and a fierce inward fire consumed him. They carried him into the orchard of the Abbey, and laid him under the trees. It was early summer, and the blossoms hung thick on every bough. Sometimes he shrieked out as though in mortal fear, and again he tuned his voice into a weird song. The light of reason came into his eyes as Sir Richard hurried in and said that the French were not far away, but he could not rally. He tried to grasp the hand of his faithful knight, but could not, and so, with the rumour of disaster and defeat around him, he died. Prince Henry knelt by his side, but the end had come, and King John passed away, leaving his kingdom threatened by the presence of an invading, victorious army, and all

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his possessions in France torn from the English crown. Worst of all, Normandy had been lost to the Plantagenets, and the great inheritance handed down by the Counts of Anjou had been gathered by King Philip and his knights. Yet with Prince Henry of Winchester, soon to be known as King Henry III., brighter days might dawn, or at least preparation be made for that time when the greatest Henry of the ancient Plantagenets would ravage France with his faithful soldiers and beat down their chivalry at Agincourt. Unknown to Sir Richard, Lewis the Dauphin had agreed before the death of King John to withdraw his army and leave the land in peace, but the stalwart son of Richard Cordelion still had faith in English hands and English hearts, and even while he gazed upon the dead body of his King, and thought that the standards of the French would soon be waving around him, he uttered the brave and confident words :

*“ This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself.
Now these her princes are come home again,
Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them. Nought shall make us rue,
If England to itself do rest but true.”*

And these brave words are true for all time, while England's sons stand as Wardens of her gates and keepers of her windswept seas.

King Richard the Second

KING Edward III. of England, who died in the year 1377, had seven children. Edward the Black Prince; Lionel, Duke of Clarence; John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster; Edmund, Duke of York; Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, and two others.

Edward the Black Prince, the illustrious soldier whose headlong bravery won for him a name of great renown, died before his father and left one young son, Richard of Bordeaux, who was publicly acknowledged as heir apparent to the English throne. Lionel, Duke of Clarence, died in 1368, leaving no male issue, although in the female line he became, with his brother Edmund, joint founder of that great House of York whose long struggle with the House of Lancaster led to the stirring period of the Wars of the Roses. John of Gaunt, by his marriage with Blanche of Lancaster, became the founder of the Lancastrian House, which afterwards gave Henry IV., Henry V., and Henry VI. to be Kings of England; and by his marriage with Catherine Swynford established the Beaufort family, from which came Henry of Richmond, afterwards Henry VII.

It was by the marriage of Edmund Tudor, Earl of Richmond, with Margaret Beaufort, that their son united both Plantagenet and Tudor, and it was by Henry VII.'s marriage with Elizabeth of York that the rival Yorkists

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and Lancastrians became one, and the long division which had deluged England with blood came to an end.

John of Gaunt in his days of strength was an able man with soaring ambitions, although his career was marred by overbearing pride and stubbornness of will. He often acted with great vigour, but sometimes allowed himself to be swayed from his purposes by supineness and indecision. In the later years of Edward III., when the love of pleasure and the demands of greedy favourites had destroyed in great measure the usefulness of the King, it was suspected with good reason that the powerful John of Gaunt was aiming at the crown, and that if opportunity served he would sweep aside the claims of young Richard of Bordeaux, and seat himself upon the throne.

In many ways the times were favourable to the action of a strong usurper. The reign of Edward III. is one of the most brilliant periods of English history, and in it chivalry, art, and commerce reached their highest development before the great age of the Renaissance brought in a new era. English soldiers had won notable victories in France, and Crecy and Poitiers had crowned their names with the laurels of imperishable renown. But the tide had begun to turn, and Edward found it impossible to maintain the glory of his earlier years. Gascony had revolted, and other parts of France were gradually lost, until at length all that remained of the vast possessions of the Angevin and Plantagenet Kings were Calais, Bordeaux, Bayonne, and a few other cities. When the boy Richard succeeded to the throne in the year 1377 he entered upon a career full of difficulties and dangers. The French were

harrying the southern coasts of England, Scotland was eager for war, Ireland was discontented and in rebellion, and a formidable insurrection of the English peasantry, under the leadership of Wat Tyler, threatened the very existence of the monarchy. At the same time religious movements were causing the Pope of Rome to issue peremptory commands to England. After the rising of the peasants had been quelled by the courage of the young King and the death of Wat Tyler, Richard advanced his uncles Cambridge and Buckingham to the dukedoms of York and Gloucester, in order to provide some check to the ambitions of the Duke of Lancaster. At the same time he made Michael de la Pole Chancellor of England, and raised Robert de Vere to be Marquis of Dublin, and transferred to him the government of Ireland. He also won over to his side Sir John Bushy, Speaker of the House of Commons, and two leading members of Parliament, Sir William Bagot and Sir Henry Green. He formed a Special Parliamentary Committee, and made these men the instruments to carry out what was considered by many to be a policy of tyranny and extortion.

In 1389 at a Council, Richard turned abruptly to his uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, and asked him how old the King was.

"Your Highness is in your twenty-second year," said the astonished Duke.

"Then," replied the King, "I must be old enough to manage my own affairs, as every heir in my kingdom is at liberty to do when he is twenty-one. I thank you, my lords, for the trouble you have taken on my behalf hitherto, but I shall not require your services any longer."

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With these words he dismissed the five lords who had been his guides, and took the affairs of the kingdom into his own hands. It was a bold stroke, but it caused much misgiving. For a few years there was comparative quiet, until it was reported that Gloucester, Arundel, and Derby were plotting against the King. They were impeached, Derby was banished to his estates in the Isle of Man, Arundel was beheaded in Cheapside, London, and Gloucester died suddenly in Calais. It was rumoured that he had been murdered by order of Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, who, as Earl Marshal, was then Governor of Calais.

One day in December 1397 the Duke of Norfolk was riding into London by the Brentford road. He chanced to fall in with Henry Bolingbroke, the son of John of Gaunt. In the course of conversation Norfolk expressed a fear that Henry Bolingbroke of Hereford, with himself, was likely to suffer from the anger of King Richard because of their suspected connection with the party of the Duke of Gloucester. Other confidences were exchanged which Norfolk regarded as secret between Hereford and himself. But to his anger and dismay, the conversation was reported to the King, and a report was drawn up by a Committee of twelve lords and six commoners, into whose hands Parliament had delegated its powers. They were all instruments of Richard, and Bushy, Bagot, and Green were leading members of it. Nothing save assertion and denial could be obtained from Hereford and Norfolk at interviews which were held at Oswestry and Windsor, and finally the King summoned both men to appear before him in London. Richard entered the audience chamber of his palace, where John of Gaunt and other nobles

awaited him. His first words were to the Duke of Lancaster, who, white-haired and frail, stood before him :

*“ Old John of Gaunt, time-honour’d Lancaster,
Hast thou, according to thy oath and band,
Brought hither Henry Hereford thy bold son,
Here to make good the boisterous late appeal,
Which then our leisure would not let us hear,
Against the Duke of Norfolk, Thomas Mowbray ? ”*

The Duke replied that his son was even now in the ante-chamber awaiting the King’s pleasure, and Richard commanded that the adversaries should be brought before him. Norfolk was a man of distinguished presence, whose open winning countenance seemed to give the denial to any charge of treason or deceit. Bolingbroke was of strong soldierly carriage, with a dark, grave face. Resolution and ambition shone in his eyes, and he well bore out the word “ bold ” which had been applied to him by the King. His cousin Richard II. was a handsome young man of quick intellectual activity, who had been endowed by Nature with rare gifts of poetical insight and powers of observation. A philosopher and a poet, he loved to have around him artists, musicians, architects, and scholars. He was lavish in his gifts to those who won his favour, and cared little how he obtained the money which he spent upon himself or his friends. He had little respect for the feelings and prejudices of the common people, and would express his mind in haughty, irritating language. He was gentle and merciful in disposition until he was crossed, and then he acted unjustly and without thought. He did not appreciate as he ought

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to have done the rising power of the people, and their love of straightforward dealing, and to the more thoughtful of his subjects he often appeared to be a selfish, frivolous oppressor. The grave, dark, politic Hereford was a striking contrast to him, and the son of John of Gaunt, already dangerously near the throne and succession, was fast supplanting Richard in the esteem of the people.

With glances of hatred at each other Mowbray and Hereford stood before the King, and at his request Henry made his charges against Norfolk. He purposely adopted a cold and contemptuous tone, choosing words which were calculated to arouse enmity rather than to allay it, and calling Mowbray a false traitor and coward, and a most injurious villain, went on to say:

*“ Look, what I speak, my life shall prove it true ;
That Mowbray hath received eight thousand nobles
In name of lendings for your highness' soldiers,
The which he hath detain'd for lewd employments,
Like a false traitor and injurious villain.
Besides I say and will in battle prove,
Or here or elsewhere to the furthest verge
That ever was survey'd by English eye,
That all the treasons for these eighteen years
Complotted and contrived in this land
Fetch from false Mowbray their first head and spring.
Further I say, and further will maintain
Upon his bad life to make all this good,
That he did plot the Duke of Gloucester's death,
Suggest his soon-believing adversaries,
And consequently, like a traitor coward,*

*Sluiced out his innocent soul through streams of blood :
Which blood, like sacrificing Abel's, cries,
Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth,
To me for justice and rough chastisement ;
And, by the glorious worth of my descent,
This arm shall do it, or this life be spent."*

The proud spirit of Norfolk quivered under the lash of Bolingbroke's insulting speech, and he flung his gauntlet at the feet of Hereford, claiming his right to meet his insulter in the lists with knightly weapons in his hand, until the injury to his honour was washed out in blood. He denied the charges made against him, and said that they had issued from the foul mind of a recreant villain and most degenerate traitor. Despite the requests of the King and John of Gaunt both Norfolk and Hereford refused to be reconciled, and not even the angry command of Richard availed to change their determination to fight out the quarrel to the death.

Mowbray cast himself before the King and cried out :

*" My life thou shalt command, but not my shame :
The one my duty owes ; but my fair name,
Despite of death that lives upon my grave,
To dark dishonour's use thou shalt not have.
I am disgraced, impeach'd and baffled here ;
Pierced to the soul with slander's venom'd spear,
The which no balm can cure but his heart-blood
Which breathed this poison."*

" Rage must be withstood," said the King, stretching out his hand, " Give me his gage : lions make leopards tame."

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Mowbray held the gauntlet of Hereford and paused irresolutely before Richard :

*"Yea, but not change his spots," he replied, "take but my shame,
And I resign my gage. My dear dear lord,
The purest treasure mortal times afford
Is spotless reputation : that away,
Men are but gilded loam or painted clay.
A jewel in a ten-times-barr'd-up chest
Is a bold spirit in a loyal breast.
Mine honour is my life ; both grow in one ;
Take honour from me, and my life is done :
Then, dear my liege, mine honour let me try ;
In that I live and for that will I die."*

It was a stirring appeal which showed how keenly Norfolk felt the charges against him, but Hereford watched him with a contemptuous smile upon his dark face. Both John of Gaunt and Hereford were striving to find proofs of King Richard's complicity in the plot which had destroyed the Duke of Gloucester, and Lancaster was feeling now that Norfolk had but acted as the instrument of the King. He prepared to leave the palace, but paused upon the threshold to hear his son's reply to the King's request to take back his gage of battle. They were as forceful as words could possibly be in their direct refusal. Casting a fierce look upon Norfolk, Bolingbroke said :

*"O, God defend my soul from such deep sin !
Shall I seem crest-fallen in my father's sight ?
Or with pale beggar-fear impeach my height
Before this out-dared dastard ? Ere my tongue*

*Shall wound my honour with such feeble wrong,
Or sound so base a parle, my teeth shall tear
The slavish motive of recanting fear,
And spit it bleeding in his high disgrace,
Where shame doth harbour, even in Mowbray's face."*

The King, on hearing his words, gave command to the knights to settle their quarrel in the lists at Coventry, upon Saint Lambert's Day, and declared that the sword and lance should arbitrate between the swelling difference of the settled hate of Hereford and Norfolk. He dismissed the assembly, and the nobles marched off with their retainers, while John of Gaunt sought his own palace. He was assured now that the guilt of Gloucester's death lay at the door of the King, although Mowbray's hand had doubtless been the instrument. The widowed Duchess of Gloucester lived in the palace of the Duke of Lancaster, and she had long clamoured for revenge upon the man she called "butcher Mowbray." But Gaunt endeavoured to turn her thoughts from vengeance, for he now feared to compromise the King. In answer to his advice to leave the quarrel to the will of heaven, she replied :

*" Finds brotherhood in thee no sharper spur ?
Hath love in thy old blood no living fire ?
Edward's seven sons, whereof thyself art one,
Were as seven vials of his sacred blood,
Or seven fair branches springing from one root :
Some of those seven are dried by nature's course,
Some of those branches by the Destinies cut ;
But Thomas, my dear lord, my life, my Gloucester,
One vial full of Edward's sacred blood,
One flourishing branch of his most royal root,*

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*Is crack'd, and all the precious liquor spilt,
 Is hack'd down, and his summer leaves all faded,
 By envy's hand and murder's bloody axe.
 Ah, Gaunt, his blood was thine !
 That metal, that self-mould, that fashion'd thee
 Made him a man ; and though thou livest and breathest,
 Yet art thou slain in him : thou dost consent
 In some large measure to thy father's death,
 In that thou seest thy wretched brother die,
 Who was the model of thy father's life.
 Call it not patience, Gaunt ; it is despair :
 In suffering thus thy brother to be slaughter'd,
 Thou showest the naked pathway to thy life,
 Teaching stern murder how to butcher thee :
 That which in mean men we intitle patience
 Is pale cold cowardice in noble breasts.
 What shall I say ? to safeguard thine own life,
 The best way is to venge my Gloucester's death."*

The old noble shook his head, and with solemn and cautious words revealed the thought that lay in his heart concerning the guilt of the King :

*" God's is the quarrel ; for God's substitute,
 His deputy anointed in His sight,
 Hath caused his death : the which if wrongfully,
 Let heaven revenge ; for I may never lift
 An angry arm against His minister."*

King Richard had given himself over to flatterers and to selfish men whose interests were more to themselves than towards the welfare of his subjects, and the death of Gloucester had alienated many of the great nobles, who saw in the death of a King's son the threat

of their own speedy execution. As the King's popularity waned that of Henry Bolingbroke increased, thus his chances of success against the prowess of Norfolk were discussed in many a castle, in merchant's houses and in the cottages of the poor, and all prayed that victory might attend him in the lists.

On a bright September day crowds of nobles, soldiers, and citizens thronged to Coventry, eager to see the issue of so momentous a strife. But Richard had prepared beforehand what course he intended to follow, and with his counsellors had agreed upon a plan which would involve both champions and rid the country of their presence. A brilliant retinue attended him when he took his place upon the throne above the arena, and all the great nobles and their ladies grouped themselves around him, and awaited the coming of the rival knights. Mowbray, preceded by his herald, rode in, and almost before the sound of his trumpet had died away, another blast was heard, and Bolingbroke, with his herald, dashed into the lists. Each knight saluted the King and then backed his horse to where the Marshal of the lists stood. The strong, steel-pointed lances were handed to them, and each herald proclaimed his master's name and degree :

*“ Harry of Hereford, Lancaster and Derby,
Stands here for God, his sovereign and himself,
On pain to be found false and recreant,
To prove the Duke of Norfolk, Thomas Mowbray,
A traitor to his God, his king and him ;
And dares him to set forward to the fight.”*

When his challenge was given Bolingbroke's herald swung his horse round and passed to the side of the

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lists. Immediately the Norfolk herald took up the strain and shouted :

*“ Here standeth Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk,
On pain to be found false and recreant,
Both to defend himself and to approve
Henry of Hereford, Lancaster and Derby,
To God, his sovereign and to him disloyal ;
Courageously and with a free desire
Attending but the signal to begin.”*

The champions backed their horses to the barriers and set their spears for the charge. The trumpets sounded the attack, and each knight drove the spurs into his horse's flanks and bent forward upon the saddle. At that moment the King gave the signal for the conflict to terminate, and the astonished knights reined up their chargers. In stern decisive tones Richard called them to him and announced that he had determined to banish them from England—Bolingbroke for ten years, and Norfolk for ever. A solemn hush fell upon all, for to a knightly soldier death with honour was preferable to the hopeless disgrace of banishment. Mowbray was overwhelmed by the terrible and most unexpected sentence, and his quivering lips could hardly frame the words he desired to utter :

*“ A heavy sentence, my most sovereign liege,
And all unlook'd for from your highness' mouth :
A dearer merit, not so deep a maim
As to be cast forth in the common air,
Have I deserved at your highness' hands.
The language I have learned these forty years,
My native English, now I must forgo :*

*And now my tongue's use is to me no more
Than an unstringed viol or a harp ;
Or like a cunning instrument cased up,
Or, being open, put into his hands
That knows no touch to tune the harmony :
Within my mouth you have engao'l'd my tongue,
Doubly portcullis'd with my teeth and lips ;
And dull unfeeling barren ignorance
Is made my gaoler to attend on me.
I am too old to fawn upon a nurse,
Too far in years to be a pupil now :
What is thy sentence then but speechless death,
Which robs my tongue from breathing native breath ? ”*

He turned to Bolingbroke and fixed upon him a steadfast gaze. He knew that the years of Hereford's banishment would be few, for he had read the high ambitions of his heart and was confident that before long King Richard would have cause to regret the bold enterprise of Henry Bolingbroke. He smiled a little when Richard limited the term of Hereford's punishment to six years, for well he knew that Richard feared the enmity of Gaunt and his able son.

Old Lancaster was not cheered that four years had been taken away from the exile. He knew that death would soon claim the life of “ time-honoured Lancaster, ” although King Richard with a cheery smile broke in upon his musing and said : “ Why, uncle, thou hast many years to live.” Gaunt replied :

*“ But not a minute, king, that thou canst give :
Shorten my days thou canst with sullen sorrow,
And pluck nights from me, but not lend a morrow ;
Thou canst help time to furrow me with age,*

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*But stop no wrinkle in his pilgrimage ;
Thy word is current with him for my death,
But dead, thy kingdom cannot buy my breath."*

Bolingbroke said little, but as he turned away many eyes followed him, and his white-haired father stood for a moment to bar his way. The King and his train had left the lists, and the Marshal halted while the father took the hands of Bolingbroke and held them in his own. Gaunt knew that he would never see his son again, and the parting was to him as bitter as death. But his chief anxiety was for his son, and he strove to cheer him with wise words of philosophic truth :

*" All places that the eye of heaven visits
Are to a wise man ports and happy havens.
Teach thy necessity to reason thus ;
There is no virtue like necessity.
Think not the king did banish thee,
But thou the king. Woe doth the heavier sit,
Where it perceives it is but faintly borne.
Go, say I sent thee forth to purchase honour
And not the king exiled thee ; or suppose
Devouring pestilence hangs in our air
And thou art flying to a fresher clime :
Look, what thy soul holds dear, imagine it
To lie that way thou go'st, not whence thou comest ;
Suppose the singing birds musicians,
The grass whereon thou tread'st the presence strew'd,
The flowers fair ladies, and thy steps no more
Than a delightful measure or a dance ;
For gnarling sorrow hath less power to bite
The man that mocks at it and sets it light."*

Bolingbroke was not deceived by the philosophy which



Gaunt knew that he would never see his son again.

would extract the sting of suffering by thinking that sorrow was but joy. He wrung his father's hand and turned away with words of farewell to England upon his lips :

*" Then, England's ground, farewell ; sweet soil, adieu ;
My mother, and my nurse, that bears me yet !
Where'er I wander, boast of this I can,
Though banish'd, yet a trueborn Englishman."*

His cousin, the young son of the Duke of York, brought him on his way. The keen north-east wind blew sharply in their faces, and forced a tear, as Aumerle said, to eyes that seldom wept. The common people stood upon the road to see him pass. He doffed his bonnet to an oyster-wench, and two stout draymen bid him God-speed. He smiled his thanks and called the people his countrymen and loving friends, and so he passed to his exile. King Richard, with Bushy, Bagot and Green, watched him go, and a cloud arose and darkened the King's mind, for well he knew that Bolingbroke carried the prayers and good wishes of nobles and people with him in his banishment. But Ireland now needed the attention of Richard, the rebels there having broken out into open war, and money was required to carry out a vigorous campaign. To obtain the necessary means the King determined to sequester the possessions of old John of Gaunt, for news had come that Lancaster was dying and had requested Richard to pay him a farewell visit. The King was little minded to hear the tedious advice of a worn-out old statesman, and did not hasten.

In a chamber in Ely House in Holborn, the palace of the Bishop of Ely, old John of Gaunt lay dying.

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His brother, the Duke of York, stood by his pillow, and the wan face of the once powerful Lancaster looked up with eager expectancy. He was longing for the coming of the King, in order that he might give a parting counsel to his young nephew. He was speaking about him to the Duke of York :

*" Methinks I am a prophet new inspired
And thus expiring do foretell of him :
His rash fierce blaze of riot cannot last,
For violent fires soon burn out themselves ;
Small showers last long, but sudden storms are short ;
He tires betimes that spurs too fast betimes ;
With eager feeding food doth choke the feeder :
Light vanity, insatiate cormorant,
Consuming means, soon preys upon itself.
This royal throne of Kings, this scepter'd isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise ;
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war ;
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands ;
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
Fear'd by their breed and famous by their birth,
Renowned for their deeds as far from home,
For Christian service and true chivalry,
As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's Son ;*

Partell of Richard's death

*This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,
Dear for her reputation through the world,
Is now leased out, I die pronouncing it,
Like to a tenement or pelting farm :
England, bound in with the triumphant sea,
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with shame,
With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds :
That England, that was wont to conquer others,
Hath made a shameful conquest of itself.
Ah, would the scandal vanish with my life,
How happy then were my ensuing death ! ”*

A sudden tramping of feet disturbed the dying man. There was the sound of laughing voices, and King Richard entered the room. He cast a hasty glance upon Lancaster, but turned away in anger when the old man warned him of the fatal course he was pursuing. After a few words the King broke in with angry upbraiding and called old Gaunt a lunatic lean-witted fool, who dared to speak to majesty with ill-considered and unreverent words. He watched him with a frown as Gaunt was borne away by his attendants, and when he learned that he was almost dead he ordered his officers to seize upon all the possessions of Lancaster, his plate, goods, jewels, and money, and to sequester his lands. He spurned the pleading of his uncle York and the remonstrances of Percy, Ross, and Willoughby, and left the chamber in a towering rage.

But the noblemen who stayed behind had news that it would have been well for Richard to have known. Henry Bolingbroke, with a numerous following of nobles and soldiers, had set sail from France in a fleet of eight

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powerful ships, and was preparing to land at Ravenspurgh, a seaport in Yorkshire between Hull and Bridlington. In the North of England the Percies were all-powerful, and Northumberland had determined to forsake Richard and rally to the standard of Bolingbroke, who, by the death of Gaunt, was now the Duke of Lancaster. Not knowing this, King Richard went off to Ireland, and during his absence his enemy landed and soon held the North of England in a powerful grip. Lancaster and his friend then pressed forward into Gloucestershire and took up their position in the Cotswold Hills. The Duke of York, with Lord Berkeley and Lord Seymour, were taken in a castle in the Welsh Marches, and afterwards Lancaster marched towards Bristol, where Bushy, Green, and other adherents of Richard were anxiously awaiting the return of the King from Ireland. Rumour had it that he was dead, and a chill fear lay upon the hearts of all his followers. Even the trusty Welshmen began to desert his standard, and one captain thus expressed his fears to the Earl of Salisbury :

*" 'Tis thought the king is dead ; we will not stay.
 The bay-trees in our country are all wither'd,
 And meteors fright the fixed stars of heaven ;
 The pale-faced moon looks bloody on the earth,
 And lean-look'd prophets whisper fearful change ;
 Rich men look sad and ruffians dance and leap,
 The one in fear to lose what they enjoy,
 The other to enjoy by rage and war :
 These signs forerun the death or fall of kings.
 Farewell : our countrymen are gone and fled,
 As well assured Richard their king is dead."*

After a fierce assault the town of Bristol was taken by Bolingbroke, Lord Wiltshire and Bushy and Green were immediately executed, and the victorious army advanced across the mountains to the coast of Wales to await the landing of King Richard.

When his vessel reached the shore after a rough and stormy voyage, the King saw that during his absence from England events had occurred which made his position almost hopeless. His strongest adherents were dispirited by the news of Bolingbroke's rapid marches and successes. In vain Richard tried to rally them by reminding them that when the sun was not shining thieves and murderers boldly pursued their wicked designs, but that when daylight returned they became alarmed and trembled.

*So when this thief, this traitor, Bolingbroke,
Who all this while hath revell'd in the night,
Whilst we were wandering with the antipodes,
Shall see us rising in our throne, the east,
His treasons will sit blushing in his face,
Not able to endure the sight of day.
But self-affrighted tremble at his sin.
Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king ;
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord :
For every man that Bolingbroke hath press'd
To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown,
God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay
A glorious angel : then, if angels fight,
Weak men must fall, for heaven still guards the right."*

With many such earnest and courageous words he

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strove to arouse the spirit of his followers, but he did not succeed. Lord Salisbury, Sir Stephen Scroop, and the Bishop of Carlisle one of Richard's most capable adherents, could only reiterate the same sad story of defection and defeat, and when the King saw that his army was melting away, the threatening spectre of deposition or death stood before him in all its terror. He lapsed into despair and realised that he was only a weak and almost helpless man despite his crown and kingly office. To the nobles who stood around he expressed his despondency in sorrowful words:

*“ For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings :
How some have been deposed ; some slain in war ;
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed ;
Some poison'd by their wives ; some sleeping kill'd ;
All murder'd : for within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king
Keeps Death his court, and there the antic sits,
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize, be fear'd and kill with looks,
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
As if this flesh which walls about our life
Were brass impregnable, and humour'd thus
Comes at the last and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king !
Cover your heads and mock not flesh and blood
With solemn reverence : throw away respect,
Tradition, form and ceremonious duty,
For you have but mistook me all this while :*

but used
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Take
words
only
no
action

*I live with bread like you, feel want,
Taste grief, need friends : subjected thus,
How can you say to me, I am a king ? ”*

As he was finishing his speech he learned that the Duke of York had joined Bolingbroke and that his own strong castles in the north and south had hoisted the standard of Lancaster upon their towers. He ordered his army to retreat upon the massive stronghold of Flint Castle, and there King Richard awaited the coming of his valiant opponent and kinsman.

He had not long to wait, for soon through every road a glittering array of knights and soldiers poured upon the plain outside the castle, and Northumberland, with Harry Hotspur, his son, demanded an audience of the King in the name of Henry Bolingbroke. Richard himself stood out upon the battlements and received the message. He was somewhat astonished to learn that Bolingbroke requested no more than the annulling of his sentence of banishment. A shrewd man would have suspected that something more serious lay behind, for the exile had been terminated by the strong action of Bolingbroke himself, and therefore its annulling was now a mere technical formality. Yet it caused the proud Richard some disquiet, and he cancelled it with reluctance, although his words were kindly.

Aumerle had not forsaken the King in spite of the fact that he had always cherished a high regard for Bolingbroke, and that his father, the Duke of York, had already set him an example of desertion. He stood upon the battlements with his eyes fixed upon the hostile camp, and sighed when he saw Northumberland once more returning. “Northumberland comes back from

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Bolingbroke," he said to Richard with a sad and meaning emphasis. The King started, for he noticed the quivering lip of the young noble and the tears which gathered in his eyes. Something told him that the most dangerous time had now come, and he murmured the ominous word "deposed."

*"What must the king do now? must he submit?
The king shall do it: must he be deposed?
The king shall be contented: must he lose
The name of king? O' God's name, let it go:
I'll give my jewels for a set of beads,
My gorgeous palace for a hermitage,
My gay apparel for an almsman's gown,
My figured goblets for a dish of wood,
My sceptre for a palmer's walking-staff,
My subjects for a pair of carved saints,
And my large kingdom for a little grave,
A little little grave, an obscure grave;
Or I'll be buried in the king's highway,
Some way of common trade, where subjects' feet
May hourly trample on their sovereign's head;
For on my heart they tread now whilst I live;
And buried once, why not upon my head?"*

Northumberland had returned to request the King to hold a parley with Bolingbroke in the base court of the castle. Richard looked around upon his own followers and knew that resistance was hopeless. He descended with Aumerle and stood in silence before Bolingbroke. Henry sank upon one knee, and the nobles bent their heads, but it was plain to all that the power had passed away from Richard, and that Bolingbroke could do what his own ambitious policy dictated. His words

were silken in softness, but steel-like in forcefulness, and when the King set out for London in the midst of a powerful and numerous escort, every one knew that he was a prisoner.

In every town and village Henry was acclaimed as the champion of an oppressed people, and the crowds hailed him as the saviour of his country. He was mounted upon a fiery steed, whose slow and stately pace made men think of majesty and conquest, and as he rode along, from roofs and casements and crowded doorways there came the waving of kerchiefs, and loud cries of "God save thee, Bolingbroke!" To every welcome he returned a stately greeting, and won all hearts by his courtesy.

Near the end of the line came King Richard, a sad, broken, and despairing figure. This is how the Duke of York described his passing when he told the story to his sorrowing lady in their palace in London :

*"As in a theatre, the eyes of men,
After a well-graced actor leaves the stage,
Are idly bent on him that enters next,
Thinking his prattle to be tedious ;
Even so, or with much more contempt, men's eyes
Did scowl on gentle Richard; no man cried 'God save him!'
No joyful tongue gave him his welcome home :
But dust was thrown upon his sacred head ;
Which with such gentle sorrow he shook off,
His face still combating with tears and smiles,
The badges of his grief and patience,
That had not God, for some strong purpose, steel'd
The hearts of men, they must perforce have melted,
And barbarism itself have pitied him."*

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At length London was reached, and Parliament was called together in the great Hall of Westminster. Bagot, the friend and instrument of Richard, had turned traitor to him, and in the presence of Bolingbroke and the assembled nobles and commons now charged Lord Aumerle with the guilty knowledge of the death of the Duke of Gloucester. By this Bolingbroke strove to bring the guilt home to King Richard, and so inflame the minds of the people still more against him. Lord Fitzwater boldly said that the banished Norfolk had sworn that Aumerle had sent two men to Calais to assassinate the Duke, and at this Bolingbroke declared that the sentence of banishment against his old opponent should be repealed. But the Bishop of Carlisle announced that it was now too late.

*“That honourable day shall ne’er be seen.
Many a time hath banish’d Norfolk fought
For Jesu Christ in glorious Christian field,
Streaming the ensign of the Christian cross
Against black pagans, Turks, and Saracens ;
And toil’d with works of war, retired himself
To Italy ; and there at Venice gave
His body to that pleasant country’s earth,
And his pure soul unto his captain Christ,
Under whose colours he had fought so long.”*

The Duke of York now called upon Bolingbroke to ascend the throne and wield the sceptre under the title of King Henry IV., and Bolingbroke would have done so forthwith had not the Bishop of Carlisle protested that they should first receive a formal renunciation from King Richard himself. Guarded by soldiers, and preceded by officers who bore the royal regalia, Richard

was brought to the bar of the Hall to make his renunciation of the crown. It was a solemn moment and one unique in the history of the land.

*" I give this heavy weight from off my head
And this unwieldy sceptre from my hand,
The pride of kingly sway from out my heart ;
With mine own tears I wash away my balm,
With mine own hands I give away my crown,
With mine own tongue deny my sacred state,
With mine own breath release all duty's rites :
All pomp and majesty I do forswear ;
My manors, rents, revenues I forgo ;
My acts, decrees, and statutes I deny :
God pardon all oaths that are broke to me !
God keep all vows unbroke that swear to thee !
Make me, that nothing have, with nothing grieved,
And thou with all pleased, that hast all achieved !
Long mayst thou live in Richard's seat to sit,
And soon lie Richard in an earthy pit !
God save King Harry, unking'd Richard says,
And send him many years of sunshine days !
What more remains ?*

Tears filled his eyes, and he could not read the papers which were forced upon him by the Earl of Northumberland. But, recovering himself with a great effort, he asked to have a looking-glass brought to him that he might look upon his own face. He gazed steadily into it, and muttering

*" A brittle glory shineth in this face :
As brittle as the glory is the face ; "*

dashed the mirror into a thousand fragments upon the

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floor of the Hall. As he turned away, the order was given to conduct him to the Tower, and Bolingbroke prepared to set out for Oxford, where another Parliament was to be held. But the order was countermanded some time afterwards, and Richard was taken to Pomfret Castle in Yorkshire, and there placed in close custody.

Before the order had been countermanded, the wife of the deposed King had hurried to a street which led to the Tower in order that she might be able to say a word of farewell to her unfortunate husband as he passed on his way to prison. At length the tramp of marching feet and the clank of weapons upon armour told her that his escort was drawing near, and presently she saw Richard in the midst of the men-at-arms. His face was pale and despondent, and his head was sunk upon his bowed shoulders. After the great excitement of the scene in Westminster Hall he had suffered a natural reaction, and was so weary that he could hardly make his way over the rough paving of the narrow street. He was in hopeless despair and moved like a man who was only half conscious. As the fearful eyes of the Queen fell upon his pathetic figure she realised that he was a man far within the valley of the shadow of death, an outward semblance of what had once been vigour and life. Her words were full of sorrow :

*"Thou map of honour, thou King Richard's tomb,
And not King Richard ; thou most beauteous inn,
Why should hard-favour'd grief be lodged in thee,
When triumph is become an alehouse guest ?"*

When he heard her voice Richard lifted his head and gazed upon his wife as one who looks from a remote and distant place. He could feel that a deep, dark



Richard lifted his head and gazed upon his wife.

stream rushed between them, and spoke as though he were already finished with earthly relationships and interests.

“ *Good sometime queen, prepare thee hence for France :
Think I am dead, and that even here thou takest,
As from my death-bed, thy last living leave.
In winter’s tedious nights sit by the fire
With good old folks, and let them tell thee tales
Of woeful ages long ago betid ;
And ere thou bid good night, to quit their griefs,
Tell thou the lamentable tale of me,
And send the hearers weeping to their beds :
For why, the senseless brands will sympathize
The heavy accent of thy moving tongue,
And in compassion weep the fire out ;
And some will mourn in ashes, some coal-black,
For the deposing of a rightful king.*”

A sound of hasty marching aroused the attention of the guards, and the Earl of Northumberland, ever active in the movements against Richard, was seen hurrying to overtake the escort of the King. He bore an order which directed the Queen to leave the country immediately, and another that Richard should be taken forthwith to Pontefract Castle. The King received the orders with quiet resignation, but he turned to Northumberland, terming him the ladder by which the mounting Bolingbroke had ascended Richard’s throne, and warning him that there could be no lasting confidence between a usurping King and the man who had helped him in his usurpation. Some day the hand which planted would try to pluck, and then there would be strife and a well-deserved death.

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"My guilt be on my head, and there an end," said Percy, with a frown, "take leave and part; for you must part forthwith."

The farewell was a solemn one. It was true that Richard by the new order had been saved from the Tower of London, that place of ill-omen and death, and in this there might be the promise that his life would not be attempted, but the Queen shuddered when she thought of what might happen in the dark dungeons of Pomfret, and her farewell was that of a loving wife who knew that she would never see her husband's face again.

But King Henry also stood in grave peril, for within a short time after Richard had reached Pomfret, a formidable plot was discovered against the life of Bolingbroke. Aumerle, who with others had been deprived of his ducal dignity, Gloucester, Oxford, Salisbury, Kent, Huntingdon, the Bishop of Carlisle, the Abbot of Westminster, and some dozen nobles and gentlemen, had set their hands to kill the King either at Windsor or on the way to Oxford. The treason was discovered by the old Duke of York, who by chance had snatched a paper from Aumerle's doublet and found the full story written therein. He at once laid it before Henry at Windsor, and Aumerle would have been beheaded had not the aged Duchess of York, his mother, won forgiveness for him by her earnest pleading. The Duke would have allowed the course of Justice to take its way, even though it meant the death of his son, and actually knelt before the King and petitioned against his repentant son and the anxious mother. But the Duchess in an eloquent appeal turned Henry's heart to mercy. Pointing to her kneeling husband, she said :

*“Pleads he in earnest ? look upon his face ;
His eyes do drop no tears, his prayers are in jest ;
His words come from his mouth, ours from our breast :
He prays but faintly and would be denied ;
We pray with heart and soul and all beside :
His weary joints would gladly rise, I know ;
Our knees shall kneel till to the ground they grow :
His prayers are full of false hypocrisy ;
Ours of true zeal and deep integrity.
Our prayers do out-pray his ; then let them have
That mercy which true prayer ought to have.”*

Aumerle was pardoned, and Henry made his plans to end the conspiracy. Northumberland and Fitzwater were sent off with strong forces to Gloucestershire and the Midlands, and the people generally took into their own hands the task of destroying the enemies of the new King. The Earls of Kent, Salisbury, Huntingdon, and Oxford were seized and beheaded by summary justice, the populace taking the law into their own hands. Thus with great vigour the cause of Henry of Bolingbroke was maintained and that of Richard destroyed. The Bishop of Carlisle was arrested, but was pardoned by Henry on condition that he spent the remainder of his days in religious retirement. And then word was brought of the tragedy which had occurred in Pontefract Castle, where the sun of King Richard set in blood and storm.

When the conspiracy had been revealed by the document taken from young Aumerle, Henry had at once associated it with an attempt to restore King Richard. Although Bolingbroke had claimed the succession as a matter of right of descent from King Henry III., every one knew that a usurpation had taken place. Young

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Mortimer, the rightful heir after Richard, was a child in the nursery, and Henry knew that his own title would be made more secure if Richard were dead. When York and Aumerle had left the presence King Henry remained in gloomy meditation. His guards were standing around the chamber, but he did not seem to notice them. He muttered to himself, and his fingers played with the jewelled dagger which hung from his belt. One of the gentlemen-at-arms heard the King say : " Have I no friend that will rid me of this living fear ? " and for an instant the dark eyes of Henry rested upon rough Sir Pierce of Exton. The soldier drew himself up and seemed to read a message in the fixed gaze of the King. Once again the words were spoken, " Have I no friend will rid me of this living fear ? " and the thoughts of Exton were directed towards the lonely prisoner of Pontefract. That night he was in the saddle, riding at furious pace along the great North road which led from London to the Scottish border. The towers of Pomfret Castle appeared in the far distance, and at length the tired knight and his followers swept up to the massive gates and demanded entrance in the name of King Henry. The portcullis was raised and the drawbridge lowered, and Sir Pierce went in to interview the Governor. The result of his coming was soon apparent. That day a special dish was prepared for King Richard's evening meal, and the keeper of the prison was warned by Exton not to taste it. It was to be given to the prisoner and no one else must venture to touch it with his lips. Exton stationed himself with several followers near the door of the King's cell in order to satisfy himself that his commands were obeyed. It was a quiet evening, and somewhere about the castle music was being played, the

sound of which penetrated into the dark prison chamber where Richard was musing on his unhappy fate. He was now cut off from every one, and felt as lonely as the dead. The bolts of the prison door were shot back, and a man stood on the threshold. He had been a poor groom of the royal stables when Richard was King, and as a favour had now begged that he might once again look upon the face of his master. It was a touching example of fidelity in one who had received little from the King's hand. As Richard questioned him about a favourite roan Barbary horse, the gaoler entered with a dish. The groom was sent away, and the King was asked to take his meal. But he refused to touch the food until the man had tasted it first, as he had been accustomed to do.

"I dare not, my lord," was the reply, "Sir Pierce of Exton, who lately came from the King, commands the contrary."

A sudden gust of passion swept over the King when he heard the name of Lancaster, and in an excess of rage he flung himself upon the keeper and began to beat him with his fists. In answer to the cry for help, Exton and his men rushed into the cell. Richard snatched an axe from one of them and killed two men, and then turned towards Exton, who was standing, dagger in hand, awaiting an opportunity to drive it into the heart of the King.

At length Exton saw his chance, and in an instant the dagger was buried to the hilt in Richard's breast. Again and again it rose and fell, and when Sir Pierce paused in his terrible work and leaned panting against the wall he saw King Richard lying, an inert mass, with his life blood welling forth and staining the rough floor of

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the cell. And so the end came to a life which had opened full of promise, and the usurpation of Lancaster had been completed with a dreadful assassination.

The body of Richard was placed in a rough coffin and taken to Windsor Castle, where King Henry IV. was receiving reports from Northumberland and other successful soldiers. Exton stepped forward and said :

*" Great king, within this coffin I present
Thy buried fear : herein all breathless lies
The mightiest of thy greatest enemies,
Richard of Bordeaux, by me hither brought."*

Bolingbroke started, and his face grew white, and then red with anger. His eyes blazed as he looked at Exton and waved his hand in token of dismissal.

"I thank thee not, for thou hast wrought a deed of slander, with thy fatal hand, upon my head and all this famous land."

"From your own mouth, my lord," stammered the dismayed Exton, "did I this deed."

The King fixed a stern gaze upon him and said :

*" They love not poison that do poison need,
Nor do I thee : though I did wish him dead,
I hate the murderer, love him murdered.
The guilt of conscience take thou for thy labour,
But neither my good word nor princely favour ;
With Cain go wander through shades of night,
And never show thy head by day nor light.
Lords, I protest, my soul is full of woe,
That blood should sprinkle me to make me grow :
Come, mourn with me for that I do lament,
And put on sullen black incontinent :*

*I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land,
To wash this blood off from my guilty hand :
March sadly after ; grace my mournings here ;
In weeping after this untimely bier."*

But though King Henry repudiated the cruel murder which took place in the sombre dungeons of Pomfret Castle, he could not stifle the voice of an aroused conscience, and from that day a heavy shadow and gloom lay upon him, his wakeful hours were melancholy, his nights were oppressive with ill dreams, and he was never able to wash the stains of blood from his hands.

King Henry the Fourth

Before the Battle of Shrewsbury

AFTER King Richard's death in Pontefract Castle, the man who had deposed him, and now reigned as King Henry IV., found that the crown which he had snatched so boisterously from his cousin was easier to seize than to hold. Insurrections were rife within his dominions, and, in addition to this menace, powerful enemies were lurking upon the Marches of Scotland and Wales, awaiting a favourable opportunity to sweep down upon England.

In the North the powerful Earl Percy of Northumberland, with his valiant son Hotspur, was trying to hold back the surging tide of Scottish invasion, and in the West Lord Grey of Ruthin, a sturdy Lancastrian, and Edmund Mortimer, were Wardens of the Welsh Marches. King Richard had always had many faithful adherents in Cheshire and the border counties, and on his death Owen Glendower, a knight who was fifth in descent from Llewellyn, the last native prince of Wales, raised the standard of insurrection, and rallied around himself not only the Welshmen but also many Englishmen who were determined to be loyal to the memory of Richard. Young Mortimer, Earl of March, was the nearest to the throne of all the descendants of Edward III., and

his succession had been publicly acknowledged, hence Henry of Lancaster was compelled to watch him with a jealous eye, especially since Edmund Mortimer, the vigilant keeper of the stormy Welsh Marches, was his nephew's guardian and the leader of many valiant soldiers. If Edmund Mortimer deserted the Lancastrian cause, and put forward the young Earl of March as the rightful King of England, his powerful following would without doubt make his defection a serious matter for King Harry.

Further, Edmund Mortimer had married the daughter of Owen Glendower, and thus his interests were linked with the Welshman. The sister of Mortimer had married young Henry Percy, whom the Scots had surnamed Hotspur because of his fiery impetuosity in battle. His father Northumberland had been King Henry's most active supporter in the movement which had brought about the deposition and death of Richard II.; and with his brother Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester, and his brother-in-law, the Earl of Westmoreland (a man who hated Worcester), now held the Scottish borderlands against Albany, the Regent of Scotland; Mordake, Earl of Fife, his eldest son; Earls Douglas, Moray, Angus, and Orkney.

In July 1402 a great Scottish army broke across the Borders and ravaged the country as far as the Tyne, holding the land in terror for more than two months. Its leaders threatened to march to London and replace upon his throne King Richard, whom they averred had escaped from Pontefract and was now present with the Scottish army.

Thus the position of King Henry was full of difficulties, and required the utmost caution and cleverness to

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avoid the many rocks and shoals which threatened the life of the new monarch. It was generally believed that the Earl of Northumberland held the fortunes of King Henry in the hollow of his hand. But the King was a wise, far-seeing statesman, persevering, shrewd, and very courageous: able to weigh up the forces likely to be brought against him, and clever enough to balance one against the other. But he had not scrupled to use base means to compass his ends, and the remembrance of past deeds troubled his sensitive conscience and destroyed much of his peace of mind. He became suspicious of those about him, and the anxiety of constant watchfulness deprived him of his sleep. He grew pale and haggard, and so nervous that men wondered at the change which had come over the man who had formerly been so vigorous.

Most of all he was disappointed because of the wild and dissolute behaviour of his eldest son Henry, a young Prince who was a striking contrast to young Harry Percy. He had become the companion of a crew of jovial, reckless roysterers who haunted taverns and were ready for any wild enterprise so long as it promised some excitement. Instead of seeking distinction upon the field of battle or in the Council, young Harry of Monmouth was risking his honour, or, as his father thought, flinging it away among his careless companions. Every man in that stirring age was being led into activity by his desire for honour or by his vain-glory; some, like Henry Bolingbroke and Owen Glendower, were striving for high positions and government; others, like Douglas and Hotspur, sought honour upon the field of battle. It was an eager, striving, pushing age, and therefore it was remarkable that the Prince

of Wales, a clever, capable young man, seemed to despise the honours so much prized and sought after by his peers, and preferred to spend his time with those who had flung all honour to the winds and were acknowledged to be a crowd of careless prodigals. At any rate, these prodigals were a merry, good-natured company, ready to drink, fight, or beat the watch, and while eager to play any fool's trick upon the busy merchants and citizens, were always ripe for song and laughter.

Their merriment was a great contrast to the solemn gravity of the Court, and their open-handed generosity seemed to imply that great possessions often encouraged miserliness. On the surface it seemed as though there was something wanting in the prizes which honour had to bestow upon its anxious, eager, unscrupulous votaries, or that there was something unworthy in the secret hearts of the men who were seeking to win them. Hotspur was described by King Henry as "a son who is the theme of honour's tongue," and Hotspur himself said :

*"By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap,
To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon,
Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,
And pluck up drowned honour by the locks ;
So he that doth redeem her thence might wear
Without corrival all her dignities."*

But a keener intellect than that of Hotspur described honour in other terms, and this man Falstaff, the leader of the wild, reckless company which had been chosen by the Prince, put the matter in these words :

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“ Well, 'tis no matter ; honour pricks me on. Yea, but how if honour prick me off when I come on ? how then ? Can honour set to a leg ? no : or an arm ? no : or take away the grief of a wound ? no. Honour hath no skill in surgery, then ? no. What is honour ? a word. What is in that word honour ? what is that honour ? air. A trim reckoning ! Who hath it ? he that died o' Wednesday. Doth he feel it ? no. Doth he hear it ? no. 'Tis insensible, then ? yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living ? no. Why ? detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it. Honour is a mere scutcheon : and so ends my catechism.”

Whatever may have been the reason of young Harry Monmouth's wildness, his father was grievously disappointed with him, and a rapidly growing distrust and suspicion made the King misunderstand the strong true character which was lying beneath the surface rubbish of folly and recklessness. Henry IV. was in his palace in London, attended by his third son, Lord John of Lancaster, the Earl of Westmoreland, Sir Walter Blunt, and others. The King had been impressed by a visit which had been paid to London by the Emperor of Constantinople, who came to arouse Western Christendom to the danger which was threatening it by the enterprise of the warlike Sultan of the Turks, Bajazet, appropriately surnamed Ilderim, or the Lightning. King Henry had long desired to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and this summons seemed to him to be the call to another crusade, an enterprise to which he and his soldiers might well set their hands. For the time being he forgot the dangers which were threatening him from Scotland and Wales.

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He smiled as he looked upon his nobles, and speaking of civil strife, said :

*“ The edge of war, like an ill-sheathed knife,
No more shall cut his master. Therefore, friends,
As far as to the sepulchre of Christ,
Whose soldier now, under whose blessed cross
We are impressed and engaged to fight,
Forthwith a power of English shall we levy ;
Whose arms were moulded in their mothers’ womb
To chase these pagans in those holy fields
Over whose acres walk’d those blessed feet,
Which fourteen hundred years ago were nail’d
For our advantage on the bitter cross.
But this our purpose now is twelve month old,
And bootless ’tis to tell you we will go :
Therefore we meet not now. Then let me hear
Of you, my gentle cousin Westmoreland,
What yesternight our council did decree
In forwarding this dear expedience.”*

The Earl of Westmoreland had been in communication with Wales and the Borders, and knew that important tidings had come from Lord Grey of Ruthin and Edmund Mortimer. Owen Glendower had hurried into Herefordshire with a powerful force, and after a sharp conflict, in which many Lancastrians were slain and barbarously mutilated, Mortimer had been made prisoner with Lord Grey. At almost the same hour a soldier had come spurring in hot haste from the banks of the Tweed to announce that the Percies and Scots had met at Holmedon Hill, and that the issue seemed to be going in favour of the Scots. But the courier had been followed by the ever-faithful servant of

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Bolingbroke, Sir Walter Blunt, and he had brought news of a wonderful victory. The Percies had cut off the retreat of the Scottish army at Holmedon Hill, near the river Tweed, and the English archers had proved themselves to be foemen of the most deadly skill. The Scottish knights tried vainly to penetrate to the centre of the position, where Hotspur and his comrades rode in the battle, but the unceasing showers of arrows drove them back, piercing the joints of their armour, gliding through steel vizors, and wounding and terrifying their horses. At length the courage of the Scottish host vanished, and a wild panic ensued. The English knights charged down upon the retreating masses, and a terrible slaughter took place. Albany's eldest son, the Earl of Fife, Douglas, Athol, Murray, Angus, Menteith, and a crowd of Scottish nobles were made prisoners, and more than ten thousand Scotsmen were left dead upon the field. It was a great triumph for England, and King Henry rejoiced greatly, although he knew that his intended expedition to the Holy Land must now be postponed indefinitely.

Hotspur had taken the most prominent part in the battle, and he it was who now sent word to the King stating that he intended to keep all the prisoners he had taken, with the exception of Mordake, Earl of Fife. If King Henry desired, he might have this son of the Duke of Albany. King Henry immediately sent word demanding all the prisoners, and summoned the Percies to appear before him in London. He was angry at the pride of Hotspur, but he could not refrain from expressing his admiration of the young soldier, and as he did so he compared his own son Harry with him, much to the disadvantage of the Prince of Wales :

*“ Yea, there thou makest me sad and makest me sin
In envy that my Lord Northumberland
Should be the father to so blest a son,
A son who is the theme of honour’s tongue ;
Amongst a grove, the very straightest plant ;
Who is sweet Fortune’s minion and her pride :
Whilst I, by looking on the praise of him,
See riot and dishonour stain the brow
Of my young Harry. O that it could be proved
That some night-tripping fairy had exchanged
In cradle-clothes our children where they lay,
And call’d mine Percy, his Plantagenet !
Then would I have his Harry, and he mine.
But let him from my thoughts.”*

A few weeks later the Earl of Northumberland, with his brother, the Earl of Worcester, and Harry Hotspur, rode into London accompanied by a great crowd of armed retainers. They were elated with the victory which had been won, and Worcester, who was a subtle schemer, thought that by it he might advance his own fortunes and strike a shrewd blow at his enemy the Earl of Westmoreland. Hotspur was prepared to vindicate his own action about the prisoners before the face of King Henry, and entered the presence with a frowning brow. The King read their attitude in their haughty demeanour and immediately administered a stern rebuke to Worcester, by commanding him to leave the palace :

*“ Worcester, get thee gone ; for I do see
Danger and disobedience in thine eye :
O, sir, your presence is too bold and peremptory,
And majesty might never yet endure*

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*The moody frontier of a servant brow.
You have good leave to leave us : when we need
Your use and counsel, we shall send for you."*

Thus, sent away with scant ceremony, Worcester was compelled to leave the conduct of a dangerous business to the impetuous Hotspur. Northumberland began to make some apology for his son by saying that a garbled version of their conduct had been laid before the King, but the high-spirited young soldier took the matter into his own hands.

*" My liege, I did deny no prisoners.
But I remember, when the fight was done,
When I was dry with rage and extreme toil,
Breathless and faint, leaning upon my sword,
Came there a certain lord, neat, and trimly dress'd,
Fresh as a bridegroom ; and his chin new reap'd
Show'd like a stubble-land at harvest-home ;
He was perfumed like a milliner ;
And 'twixt his finger and his thumb he held
A pouncet-box, which ever and anon
He gave his nose and took't away again ;
Who therewith angry, when it next came there,
Took it in snuff ; and still he smiled and talk'd,
And as the soldiers bore dead bodies by,
He call'd them untaught knaves, unmannerly,
To bring a slovenly unhandsome corse
Betwixt the wind and his nobility.
With many holiday and lady terms
He question'd me ; amongst the rest, demanded
My prisoners in your majesty's behalf.
I then, all smarting with my wounds being cold,*

*To be so pester'd with a popinjay,
 Out of my grief and my impatience,
 Answer'd neglectingly I know not what,
 He should, or he should not ; for he made me mad
 To see him shine so brisk, and smell so sweet,
 And talk so like a waiting-gentlewoman
 Of guns and drums and wounds,—God save the
 mark !—*

*And telling me the sovereign'st thing on earth
 Was parmaceti for an inward bruise ;
 And that it was great pity, so it was,
 This villainous salt-petre should be digg'd
 Out of the bowels of the harmless earth,
 Which many a good tall fellow had destroy'd
 So cowardly ; and but for these vile guns,
 He would himself have been a soldier.
 This bald unjointed chat of his, my lord,
 I answer'd indirectly, as I said ;
 And I beseech you, let not his report
 Come current for an accusation
 Betwixt my love and your high majesty."*

It was an earnest and eloquent appeal, but King Henry had an even graver matter in his mind, for the Percies were anxious that Edmund Mortimer, like Lord Grey of Ruthin, should be ransomed by the King from the hands of Glendower. This Henry was not minded to do, for he knew that the true heir to the English throne was under the guardianship of the powerful Mortimer, and it seemed to be a wise policy to allow the captured soldier to remain in the hands of the Welsh chieftain. He overlooked the fact, or was careless of the significance, that Mortimer's sister was the wife of Hotspur. Calling

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Mortimer, therefore, a traitor, and a revolter, whose conflict with Glendower had only been a pitiful pretence, the King refused to pay anything for his ransom, even if the man were in danger of starving upon the barren mountains of Wales. His anger was now fully worked up, and calling Hotspur "Sirrah," he ordered him to send the Scottish prisoners to London by the speediest means, or he should hear of it in a way that would displease him.

As the King left the Chamber Worcester re-entered it, and the Percies gazed at each other with blazing eyes and frowning, rebellious brows. Hotspur was almost mad with rage, and in furious tones he denounced the King as a vile politician, a canker, a subtle schemer whose unclean hands had involved the Percies in murderous deeds, and who was now secretly plotting against their honour and lives. For himself he said that he was prepared to renounce his allegiance to Bolingbroke, and enter into a league with his opponents in Scotland and Wales. The subtle Earl of Worcester here interposed, and suggested a scheme which he admitted was as full of peril as walking over a furious torrent upon the slender shaft of a spear. Briefly, it was to ally themselves with Douglas in Scotland and Glendower in Wales, and thus bring a most powerful force to bear against the throne of King Henry. Hotspur welcomed the suggestion with enthusiasm, and vowed to devote his life to the task of destroying the Lancastrians.

*"All studies here I solemnly defy,
Save how to gall and pinch this Bolingbroke :
And that same sword-and-buckler Prince of Wales,*

*But that I think his father loves him not
And would be glad he met with some mischance,
I would have him poison'd with a pot of ale.'*

When the kinsmen separated, Worcester had arranged to steal away to Glendower and Mortimer, while Hotspur made his league with Douglas, and the Earl of Northumberland aroused his soldiers and retainers to essay the task of plucking the crown of England from Henry Bolingbroke and his degenerate son, the madcap Prince of Wales.

Meanwhile Prince Henry was making merry with his jovial prodigals. He was seated with Sir John Falstaff and Poins, and the three were plotting a highway robbery. The plan had been suggested by Ned Poins. Certain pilgrims were journeying to Canterbury with rich offerings for the shrine of Thomas à Becket, and a number of merchants with fat purses were staying a night at Rochester before making their way to London. With Bardolph (a red-nosed, hard-drinking soldier, and Peto his comrade), Poins, the Prince, and Falstaff, determined to waylay the travellers on Gadshill near Rochester, and it was decided to have a merry supper at the Boar's Head Tavern in Eastcheap to commemorate the exploit. With many jests and much laughter the matter was arranged, and thus while Harry Hotspur and Worcester were plotting a great national movement which would involve many lives and perhaps destroy King Henry IV., Harry Monmouth and Falstaff were planning how they might successfully achieve a highway robbery in which a few peaceful merchants and pilgrims were to be deprived of their offerings and gains.

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In personal appearance Sir John Falstaff presented a grotesque figure; he was extremely stout and had short legs, and looked a huge tun of a man. He had a shining, bald head with a fringe of white hair, a flushed face, and a hoarse voice which had been deepened and mellowed by copious draughts of wine. He said that he had been born with a white head and round figure, and had destroyed his voice with singing anthems. He also explained his fatness by ascribing it to sorrow, and said: "A plague of sighing and grief, it blows a man up like a bladder." His appearance was so comical that it was a signal for laughter to all who saw him, and thus he was not only witty in himself, but the cause that wit was in other men. It was easy, but dangerous, to make him a butt and a jest, for he had a tongue as cutting as a whiplong and an intellect as sharp as a rapier point. He was a man of good birth and breeding, and had entered active life as a page in the service of the Duke of Norfolk, where, doubtless, he had learned the ceremonies of the Court and the etiquette of high life. He was well read and could quote many authors, although he usually wrested their words to suit some quaint meaning of his own. He could explain what Galen had said about apoplexy, and was familiar with the drama of his day, and could speak about the style of King Cambyses. Above all he knew the words of Holy Scripture, and quoted more texts and misused them more cleverly than any other character in the writings of Shakespeare. Although he associated with vicious companions he never allowed them to take liberties with him, and always stood upon his dignity of birth and station. He said that he was Jack Falstaff with his familiars, John with his brothers

and sisters, and Sir John with all Europe. He was, in his early manhood, a law student of Clement's Inn, and soon became notorious for his riotous behaviour. With his reckless companions John Doit of Staffordshire, Black George Barnes, Francis Pickbone, and Robert Shallow of Gloucester, he made the Strand re-echo with his drunken mirth, fought the watch and broke their heads, and reeled home to his lodgings after the chimes had rung out the hour of midnight. He was the leader of the revelry, and Shallow, "you were called 'lusty Shallow' then, cousin," was the butt. Falstaff was clever enough for anything, but applied himself to nothing that was good; he had a good angel about him, but Satan outbid him and prevailed. After a few years he drifted away from the law, and made the Boar's Head Tavern his headquarters, where he quickly gathered about him Bardolph, Nym, Pistol, Mistress Quickly, Doll Tearsheet, and the rest of the prodigals. His training and intellect ought to have led him to a position of honour among his countrymen, but he openly derided what so many called "honour" and deliberately sought the company of men and women who had flung it to the winds. Yet when Sir John gave himself time to think he knew that he was playing an unworthy part, and that while he was making himself the associate of the base he was destroying the good within him. He laughed at conscience, but could not kill the warning voice. His companions often taunted him with his promised repentance and remorse. The Prince reminded him of the death he owed to God, and Poins said that Sir John had sold his soul on a Good Friday for a cup of Madeira wine. He himself longed, in one of his better moments, for the far-past days when he had a

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true face and a good conscience, It was significant that his bedroom was painted about with the Story of the Prodigal, fresh and new. His brilliant intellect seemed to delight in setting itself against the common decencies of life and in despising the limitations and ideals of the ordinary crowd. And yet behind all his assurance and unscrupulousness he had a wonderful store of animal spirits, an unfailing humour, and a geniality which nothing could overcome. Every one liked him. Prince Henry said he could better spare a better man, Doll Tearsheet loved him better than e'er a scurvy boy of them all, Dame Quickly burst into tears when he went off to the wars, and Bardolph, who had been his tool for more than thirty years, wished that he could always be with him, either in heaven or hell. He was the prince of jesters, and moments were never dull when Falstaff was near to illumine them with his flashing wit.

The strange paradox of his character has been well described in these words, "Falstaff is a man at once young and old, enterprising and fat, a dupe and a wit, harmless and wicked, weak in principle and resolute by constitution, cowardly in appearance and brave in reality, a knave without malice, a liar without deceit, and a knight, a gentleman and a soldier, without either dignity, decency or honour"; and by Coleridge in this way, "He was no coward, but pretended to be one merely for the sake of trying experiments on the credulity of mankind; he was a liar with the same object, and not because he loved falsehood for itself. He was a man of such pre-eminent abilities as to give him a profound contempt for all those by whom he was surrounded, and to lead to a determination on his part, in spite of their superiority, to make them his tools and his dupes. He

knew, however low he descended, that his own talents would raise him, and extricate him from any difficulty. While he was thought to be the greatest rogue, thief, and liar, he still had that about him which could render him not only respectable, but absolutely necessary to his companions."

According to Professor Dowden : " Falstaff supposed that by infinite play of wit, and inexhaustible resource of a genius creative of splendid mendacity, he could coruscate away the facts of life, and always remain master of the situation by giving it a clever turn in the idea, or by playing over it with an arabesque of arch waggery."

When Poins and the Prince explained the nature of the highway robbery, Falstaff decided to join them, but Poins arranged something which he did not mention to the fat knight. Falstaff, Bardolph, Peto, and Gadshill were to rob the travellers, and then the Prince and Poins would attack the thieves, disguising themselves so that they could not be recognised even by the quick-witted Falstaff. " The virtue of this jest will be," said Poins, " the incomprehensible lies that this same fat rogue will tell us when we meet at supper : how thirty, at least, he fought with ; what words, what blows, what extremities he endured ; and in the reproof of this lies the jest."

It was a dark night when the ostler of the inn at Rochester came yawning and stretching out of his bed of hay, long before the earliest peep of day was seen. The clock had just struck two, and the carrier's men were busily preparing to take the road for London. Gadshill, one of the merry thieves, was prying about to find out how much treasure was likely to be on the road. Some

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four or five miles away, in the hollow of a hill, the Prince, Poins, and Falstaff were hiding behind the hedges. Poins had taken Falstaff's horse away, and the fat knight was therefore compelled to tramp up the long hill. He groaned and grumbled at the darkness and the uneven roadway.

"I am accursed to rob in that thief's company," he muttered, "the rascal hath removed my horse, and tied him I know not where. A plague on him. Eight yards of uneven ground is three-score and ten miles afoot with me; and the stony-hearted villains know it well enough; a plague upon it when thieves cannot be true one to another."

When they reached the chosen spot, the Prince told Falstaff to lie down and lay his ear to the ground in order to hear the tread of the coming travellers.

"Have you any levers to lift me up again, being down," grumbled Falstaff. "Help me to my horse, good King's son."

"Out, ye rogue," said the Prince, "shall I be your ostler?"

"Go hang thyself in thine own heir-apparent garters! If I be ta'en, I'll peach for this," returned the knight.

Several low whistles were heard, and presently Gadshill, Peto, and Bardolph came up and said that the travellers were nearly at the top of the hill.

"You four shall front them," said the Prince, "while Ned Poins and I walk lower: if they 'scape from your encounter, then they light on us."

The Prince and Poins slipped away to put on their disguises, and waited in the thickets near by. The travellers came puffing to the top of the hill, and Falstaff and his three companions darted out of their

concealment. The travellers made little resistance, and the four thieves, having bound them, began to share the booty. They were startled by a loud shout, and leaped to their feet as two men with drawn swords dashed at them. Peto, Bardolph, and Gadshill dropped their treasure and scuttled away. Falstaff struck a blow or two and then decamped, pounding down the hill, and puffing and blowing in a vain endeavour to get wind for a long run. The Prince and Poins, despite their uproarious laughter, could hear him thudding along the road in the darkness, and they knew that he would not dare to stop until he had placed a good many miles between himself and the assaulted travellers.

They caught their horses, sprang into the saddles and set off for London at a good round pace, and in the evening were cosily seated before the fire in the panelled guest-room of the Boar's Head Tavern. The Prince was in rare good humour, and was entertaining Poins with a description of Harry Hotspur, the hard-working soldier, "he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife, "Fie upon this quiet life ! I want work."

A heavy step was heard outside, and Falstaff, travel-stained and muddy, with scratched face and hands, stood in the doorway.

"Welcome, Jack," said the Prince. "Where hast thou been ?"

The knight rubbed his parched lips and scowled. "A plague of all cowards, I say, and a vengeance too ! Marry, and amen ! Give me a cup of sack, boy. A plague of all cowards ! You rogue, here's lime in this sack too : there is nothing but roguery to be found in villainous man : yet a coward is worse than a cup of

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sack with lime in it. A villainous coward! Go thy ways, old Jack; die when thou wilt, if manhood, good manhood, be not forgot upon the face of the earth, then am I a shotten herring. There lives not three good men unhang'd in England; and one of them is fat, and grows old: God help the while! a bad world I say. I would I were a weaver; I could sing psalms or any thing. A plague of all cowards, I say still."

He could not pardon the supposed desertion by the Prince and Poins, and began to enlarge upon the thousand pound which he said he had captured, and which had afterwards been stolen from him by a hundred villains who attacked his three comrades and himself.

"A hundred?" cried the Prince in astonishment.

"I am a rogue, if I were not at half-sword with a dozen of them two hours together. I have 'scaped by miracle. I am eight times thrust through the doublet, four through the hose; my buckler cut through and through; my sword hacked like a hand-saw—*ecce signum!* I never dealt better since I was a man: all would not do: if I fought not with fifty of them, I am a bunch of radish: if there were not two or three and fifty upon poor old Jack, then am I no two-legged creature."

Once started upon the narrative Falstaff improved upon the story, telling how he had killed two rogues in buckram, and that then four—six—eleven knaves in buckram sprang at him, followed by three villains dressed in Kendal green who stole upon him before he could see them in the pitch-black darkness of the night. A roar of laughter from the Prince stopped him.

"If it was so dark," said he, "how didst thou know

that they were dressed in Kendal green. Give me the reason ! ”

But Falstaff swore that he would give no man a reason upon compulsion, and then the Prince told him the true story of the attack, and that only Poins and himself had taken part in it. The knight was nonplussed for an instant, but recovering himself he said : “ By the Lord, I knew ye as well as he that made ye. Why hear you, my masters ; was it for me to kill the Heir Apparent ? Why should I turn upon the true Prince ? Why, thou knowest I am as valiant as Hercules : but beware instinct ; the lion will not touch the true prince. Instinct is a great matter ; I was now a coward on instinct. I shall think the better of myself and thee during my life ; I for a valiant lion, and thou for a true prince. But, by the Lord, lads, I am glad you have the money. Hostess, clap to the doors : watch to-night, pray to-morrow.”

His speech was interrupted by the announcement that an officer from the court was waiting outside to speak with him. During his absence the Prince heard from his companions how Falstaff had hacked his own sword with his dagger and tickled his nose with spear-grass to make it bleed. They were laughing over the story when Falstaff returned with news that Hotspur had made a league with Glendower and that war would soon break out. Then the Prince and the knight made a mock of King Henry by parodying his sorrow at the dissolute behaviour of the young Harry Monmouth ; and just when the fun was at its height a heavy knock announced the coming of the Sheriff and his officers to arrest Falstaff and search the house. The knight was thrust behind a curtain to evade the Sheriff, and the

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Prince swore that he was not in the tavern, and that he himself would be answerable for his appearance before the Justices. The Sheriff went off, and had hardly left the tavern when a heavy snoring from behind the curtain showed that Falstaff had gone to sleep. They searched his pockets and Peto found a tavern bill which was as follows :

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
"Item, A capon	2	2
Item, Sauce	0	4
Item, Sack, two gallons	5	8
Item, Anchovies and sack after supper .	2	6
Item, Bread		<i>ob.</i> "

"O monstrous!" laughed the Prince, "but one half-pennyworth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack! What there is else, keep close; we'll read it at more advantage: there let him sleep till day. I'll to the court in the morning. We must all to the wars, and thy place shall be honourable. I'll procure this fat rogue a charge of foot; and I know his death will be a march of twelve-score. The money shall be paid back again with advantage. Be with me betimes in the morning; and so, good morrow, Peto."

When Falstaff awoke, after his long sleep, he fumbled about and presently discovered that his pockets had been picked. His mouth was dry, and he had a woeful headache. He said that he felt as withered as an old apple-John, and that villainous company had been his ruin. He swore that he would repent and turn from his wicked ways. He called Bardolph the Knight of the Burning Lamp, and said that the red nose of the soldier was like a fire or a salamander. He called the hostess and demanded who it was that had picked his pockets.

“ Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn but I shall have my pocket picked ? ” he roared. “ I have lost a seal ring of my grandfather’s worth forty mark.” He was stamping around the room in a rage when the door was flung open and the Prince and Peto came marching in like soldiers. Falstaff snatched up a piece of wood and pretended to play upon it as a bugler plays a fife. Together they all strutted round the room, and the Prince announced that the army would soon march away, and that Falstaff had been made the captain of a company of foot soldiers.

“ Rare words ! brave world ! ” said the knight. “ Hostess, my breakfast, come ! O, I could wish this tavern were my drum.”

Prince Henry had had a long and rather stormy interview with his father, and the King had upbraided his son for his inordinate and low desires, and the rude society in whose company so many hours were wasted. He reminded him of his high position and the responsibilities which belonged to his rank, warning him that if he made himself the plaything of common vulgar people that some day the people would get tired of him, and fling him aside as they had King Richard. When Henry said that hereafter he would be more like a Prince, the King reminded him once again of the knightly Harry Percy.

*“ For all the world
As thou art to this hour was Richard then
When I from France set foot at Ravenspurgh,
And even as I was then is Percy now.
Now, by my sceptre and my soul to boot,
He hath more worthy interest to the State*

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*Than thou the shadow of succession ;
 For of no right, nor colour like to right,
 He doth fill fields with harness in the realm,
 Turns head against the lion's armed jaws,
 And, being no more in debt to years than thou,
 Leads ancient lords and reverend bishops on
 To bloody battles and to bruising arms.
 What never-dying honour hath he got
 Against renowned Douglas ! whose high deeds,
 Whose hot incursions and great name in arms
 Holds from all soldiers chief majority
 And military title capital
 Through all the kingdoms that acknowledge Christ :
 Thrice hath this Hotspur, Mars in swathing clothes,
 This infant warrior, in his enterprizes
 Discomfited great Douglas, ta'en him once,
 Enlarged him and made a friend of him,
 To fill the mouth of deep defiance up,
 And shake the peace and safety of our throne."*

The Prince saw that his father was greatly moved, and all that was best in him was stirred by the earnest words of the anxious King. His face flushed, and the light of the warrior shone in his eyes. He felt that for long he had been misunderstood, and that the distrust of his father had contributed in no small degree to his reckless folly, but the nobility of his character had only been brushed with his vices, and he now resolved to vindicate the strong manhood which was in him.

*" The time will come,
 That I shall make this northern youth exchange
 His glorious deeds for my indignities.*

*Percy is but my factor, good my lord,
To engross up glorious deeds on my behalf ;
And I will call him to so strict account,
That he shall render every glory up,
Yea, even the slightest worship of his time,
Or I will tear the reckoning from his heart.
This, in the name of God, I promise here :
The which if He be pleased I shall perform,
I do beseech your majesty may salve
The long-groven wounds of my intemperance :
If not, the end of life cancels all bands ;
And I will die a hundred thousand deaths
Ere break the smallest parcel of this vow."*

When he heard these words the King clasped the hand of his son, and said that a hundred thousand rebels died in this brave declaration. He was inspired with a new energy, for he dearly loved the Prince of Wales, and knew now that he had secured an ally of the noblest courage.

Away in Bangor, Harry Hotspur, the Earl of Worcester, Mortimer, and Glendower were holding an anxious consultation concerning their future movements. The fiery Hotspur could not brook the vainglorious speeches of the Welsh chieftain. Glendower believed that heaven had marked him from his birth for great achievements, and boasted that he was not on the roll of common men. He said that when he was born goats ran wildly upon the mountains, the cattle leaped about the fields, and fiery cressets blazed in the heavens, while the affrighted earth trembled.

"So it would have done at the same season," said Hotspur, with a laugh, "if your mother's cat had but kittened, though yourself had never been born."

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"I can call spirits from the vasty deep," shouted Glendower, as he started to his feet and laid his hand upon his sword.

"Why, so can I, or so can any man," jeered the undaunted Hotspur, "but will they come when you do call for them?"

"Why, I can teach you, cousin, to command the devil."

"And I can teach thee, coz, to shame the devil by telling truth: tell truth and shame the devil."

Mortimer and Worcester tried to quiet the excited Welshman, but Hotspur galled him into fury, and had it not been for the entrance of their ladies the quarrel might have ended in bloodshed. The northern soldiers were finally ordered to march through the borders to Shrewsbury where, in a strong position near the river, Hotspur, Worcester, and Douglas awaited the coming of the wild mountaineers who marched under the flag of Glendower. But the chieftain delayed, and thus it happened that King Henry, marching rapidly through the Midland counties by way of Burton-on-Trent, came upon them and instantly prepared to give them battle. He had a strong force with him, and made his preparations for attack with all the skill of an accomplished and experienced general. It was the month of July, and the long summer day promised ample opportunity for a well-fought battle. Northumberland had fallen ill in the North and could not join his son, so, with the failure of Glendower to join the rebels, King Henry knew that a golden chance had fallen to him. Sir Richard Vernon rode past the royal army on his way to join Hotspur and Worcester, and saw the soldiers stepping forward as though victory already lay within their



"This, in the name of God, I promise here."



grasp. When he joined the rebels he told Hotspur what he had seen :

*“ I saw young Harry, with his beaver on,
His cuisses on his thighs, gallantly armed,
Rise from the ground like feather’d Mercury,
And vaulted with such ease into his seat,
As if an angel dropp’d down from the clouds,
To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus,
And witch the world with noble horsemanship.”*

Prince Henry and the Earl of Westmoreland had come upon Falstaff just outside Coventry, and the sight of Falstaff’s regiment filled both leaders with uncontrollable laughter. In truth the soldiers were a marvellous company, of all sizes, young and old, the very off-scourings of the streets. Falstaff had misused the King’s press and made a large sum of money by letting good men off, and pressing thieves and vagabonds, such as feared the report of a gun worse than a struck fowl or a hurt wild duck. “Now,” said he, with a chuckle, “my whole charge consists of ancients, corporals, lieutenants, gentlemen of companies, slaves as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth, where the glutton’s dogs licked his sores ; and such as indeed were never soldiers, but discarded unjust serving-men, younger sons to younger brothers, revolted tapsters, and ostlers trade-fallen ; the cankers of a calm world and a long peace, ten times more dishonourable-ragged than an old-faced ancient ; and such have I, to fill up the rooms of them that have bought out their services, that you would think that I had a hundred and fifty tattered prodigals lately come from swine-keeping, from eating draff and husks. A mad fellow met me on the way and told me I had

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unloaded all the gibbets and pressed the dead bodies. No eye hath seen such scarecrows. I'll not march through Coventry with them, that's flat: nay, and the villains march wide between the legs, as if they had gyves on; for indeed I had the most of them out of prison. There's but a shirt and a half in all my company; and the half shirt is two napkins tacked together and thrown over the shoulders like a herald's coat without sleeves; and the shirt, to say the truth, stolen from my host at Saint Alban's, or the red-nose innkeeper of Daventry. But that's all one; they'll find linen enough on every hedge."

Still, as Falstaff said, they were good enough to be food for powder, and would fill a pit as well as better men, and so they plodded on towards Shrewsbury, making the best of their way, and picking up as much as they could from drying-green and hedge-row.

King Henry at first endeavoured to make peace with his opponents, and sent a kindly message to Hotspur, but Worcester, for his own purposes, altered and kept back part of the King's word, and the impetuous soldier became yet more stubborn against his opponents. He urged his comrades to be valiant and enterprising, even though the chances seemed to be going against them. A messenger came in from the North with letters, but he would not stay to read them.

"I cannot read them now.

O gentlemen, the time of life is short!

To spend that shortness basely were too long,

If life did ride upon a dial's point,

Still ending at the arrival of an hour.

An if we live, we live to tread on kings;

*If die, brave death, when princes die with us !
Now, for our consciences, the arms are fair,
When the intent of bearing them is just."*

Richard Scroop, the Archbishop of York, and his friend, Sir Michael, awaited tidings from Shrewsbury with much misgiving. The Archbishop was brother to the Earl of Wiltshire (the friend of Richard II., whom Henry Bolingbroke had put to death after the capture of Bristol), and had taken a prominent part in declaring that King Henry was a perjured traitor to his kinsman King Richard. He knew well if Hotspur and Douglas were defeated at Shrewsbury, that the King would deal swiftly with Sir Michael and himself.

With pennons flying and trumpets blowing, the Royalists advanced to the attack, and soon a terrible conflict was in progress. Douglas sought everywhere for the King, for he had vowed that he would fight with none save Bolingbroke. Several knights were wearing the King's arms upon their surcoats, and these men were attacked and slain by the warlike Scot. Sir Walter Blunt was one of those who fell.

Falstaff was soon separated from his men, and fought according to his own way. As he drew near the dead body of Sir Walter Blunt he muttered to himself, "Though I could 'scape shot-free at London, I fear the shot here; here's no scoring but upon the pate. I am as hot as molten lead, and as heavy too: God keep lead out of me!"

As he leaned upon his sword striving to get his breath, Prince Henry dashed up. He had lost his sword, and cried out to Falstaff:

"Percy is alive. Lend me thy sword."

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"Nay, before God, Hal," was his reply, "if Percy be alive, thou get'st not my sword; but take my pistol if thou wilt."

"Give it me: what, is it in the case?"

"Ay, Hal; 'tis hot, 'tis hot; there's that will sack a city."

The Prince, in his eagerness to get the weapon, tore open the case, and discovered a black bottle containing wine. He flung it at Falstaff in a rage, crying out: "What, is it a time to jest and dally now?" And in an instant was gone. He had seen his father fighting a hard hand to hand conflict with Douglas, and now rushed to his rescue.

Douglas turned from the King and darted into the thick of the battle. Hardly had the King followed than Hotspur saw the Prince and struck a heavy blow at him. They fought for some time, and Falstaff, seeing them, ran up, calling upon the Prince to strike manfully. He had just said the words when Douglas darted towards him, and Falstaff, knowing that he had a skilled swordsman to encounter, gave a shout and dropped like a stone, whereupon Douglas, thinking that he had been killed, left him prostrate among the dead and wounded to seek other adversaries. Meanwhile Prince Henry and Hotspur were waging a gallant contest, but fortune was against the brave Percy, and he fell, pierced through and through, and died after gasping out a few words of farewell. Breathless with the struggle, the Prince saw his adversary die, and was turning away when his eye lighted upon the prostrate form of Falstaff:

*"What, old acquaintance! could not all this flesh
Keep in a little life? Poor Jack, farewell!
I could have better spared a better man:"*

*O, I should have a heavy miss of thee,
If I were much in love with vanity !
Death hath not struck so fat a deer to-day,
Though many dearer, in this bloody fray.
Embowell'd will I see thee by and by :
Till then in blood by noble Percy lie."*

He waved his hand in a last farewell, and went off. He had only gone a short distance when the seeming dead body rose up to a sitting posture, and the round, smiling face of Falstaff was seen.

"Embowelled!" said he, with a sly grin, "if thou embowel me to-day, I'll give you leave to powder me and eat me too to-morrow. 'Sblood, 'twas time to counterfeit, or that hot termagant Scot had paid me scot and lot too. Counterfeit? I lie, I am no counterfeit: to die, is to be a counterfeit: for he is but the counterfeit of a man who hath not the life of a man: but to counterfeit dying, when a man thereby liveth, is to be no counterfeit, but the true and perfect image of life indeed. The better part of valour is discretion; in the which better part I have saved my life."

As he rose to his feet he espied the body of Hotspur, and immediately his subtle brain conceived a plot. Taking his sword he gashed the dead man in the thigh, and hoisted him on to his shoulders. As he was bearing him away, Prince Henry and John of Lancaster met him.

"Did you not tell me this fat man was dead?" said the younger Prince.

"I did," replied Prince Henry, "I saw him dead, breathless and bleeding on the ground. Art thou alive? or is it fantasy that plays upon our eyesight?"

Falstaff showed that he was alive by throwing the

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dead body to the ground, and said : " There is Percy : if your father will do me any honour, so ; if not, let him kill the next Percy himself. I look to be either earl or duke, I can assure you."

This was making a claim with a vengeance, for to kill so skilful a fighter as Percy was indeed to be a hero of the first rank. But it was more than the Prince of Wales could allow to pass without challenge.

" Why," said he, " Percy I killed myself, and saw thee dead."

" Didst thou ? " replied Falstaff, with a solemn look. " Lord, Lord, how this world is given to lying ! I grant you I was down and out of breath ; and so was he : but we rose both at an instant, and fought a long hour by Shrewsbury clock. If I may be believed, so ; if not, let them that should reward valour bear the sin upon their own heads. I'll take it upon my death, I gave him this wound in the thigh ; if the man were alive, and would deny it, zounds, I would make him eat a piece of my sword."

It was useless debating the question with a man like Falstaff, so the Prince bade him bear his luggage upon his back, and make his statement to the King.

Everywhere the royal troops had gained the victory. Worcester and Vernon were captured, and instantly led to execution. Douglas was taken at the foot of a precipice down which he had fallen in his rapid retreat. The King pardoned him, and set him free without ransom, and the army was then divided, Prince John and Westmoreland hurrying to the North to attack Northumberland and the Archbishop, while the King and the Prince of Wales marched towards the mountains behind which Glendower and Mortimer had drawn up their forces for a stubborn resistance.

King Henry the Fourth

After the Battle of Shrewsbury

IN the sick chamber of his strong castle the great Earl of Northumberland was awaiting, with anxious heart, the tidings from the battlefield of Shrewsbury. He knew that swift couriers would be sent off by Hotspur on the first opportunity, for his son was ever dutiful when tidings of victory were to be sent. Lord Bardolph, Travers, and Morton, three faithful retainers of the Percies, had hurried from the field. Bardolph, early in the fight, Travers later, and Morton when the last fierce charges of the royalists had proved that the day had gone against Hotspur and Douglas. With loose rein Lord Bardolph rode his wearied horse to the great gates of the fortress. The drawbridge was lowered and he dashed into the courtyard, mounting with eager steps to the chamber of his lord. The Earl had now gone to take the air in his orchard, and thither Bardolph followed to cheer him with the news of a glorious victory. But hardly had he given his message than the sound of a galloping horse was heard, and Travers spurred across the plain, closely followed by another rider, whose powerful steed swept along with the speed of the wind. Morton had hardly stammered out tidings of defeat when Travers was seen hurrying towards the orchard. A glance at his face showed the Earl that his tidings were of the

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most fateful import. He read his message in the man's pale face :

*“ Yea, this man's brow, like to a title-leaf,
Foretells the nature of a tragic volume :
So looks the strond whereon the imperious flood
Hath left a witness'd usurpation.”*

Morton had terrible news to give—that Hotspur was dead, Douglas taken a prisoner, the army routed and dispersed, and that a powerful force under Prince John of Lancaster and the Earl of Westmoreland was even now marching northwards to strike a final blow at the Earl and his ally, the Archbishop of York. “This is the news in full,” he said, as he leaned against a tree, worn out with fatigue. Northumberland strode to and fro for a few minutes as though striving to recover from the stunning effects of a heavy blow. Then his eye flashed and the colour came to his face. When he spoke it was in firm tones :

*“ For this I shall have time enough to mourn.
In poison there is physic ; and these news,
Having been well, that would have made me sick,
Being sick, have in some measure made me well :
And as the wretch, whose fever-weaken'd joints,
Like strengthless hinges, buckle under life,
Impatient of his fit, breaks like a fire
Out of his keeper's arms, even so my limbs,
Weaken'd with grief, being now enraged with grief,
Are thrice themselves. Hence, therefore, thou nice
crutch !
A scaly gauntlet now with joints of steel
Must glove this hand : and hence, thou sickly quoif !*

*Thou art a guard too wanton for the head
Which princes, flesh'd with conquest, aim to hit.
Now bind my brows with iron ; and approach
The ragged'st hour that time and spite dare bring
To frown upon the enraged Northumberland !
Let heaven kiss earth ! now let not Nature's hand
Keep the wild flood confined ! let order die !
And let this world no longer be a stage
To feed contention in a lingering act ;
But let one spirit of the first-born Cain
Reign in all bosoms, that, each heart being set
On bloody courses, the rude scene may end,
And darkness be the burier of the dead ! ”*

These strong words of defiance were hardly welcomed by the men who had experienced the valour of King Henry's soldiers on the terrible field of Shrewsbury, and yet they knew that they had ventured too far to draw back now. Their chief concern was the physical health of Northumberland, and they were building great hopes upon the effect of the words and example of the Archbishop of York. Morton reminded the Earl that the prelate had now turned insurrection to religion and had thus gained many adherents :

*“ Supposed sincere and holy in his thoughts,
He's followed both with body and with mind ;
And doth enlarge his rising with the blood
Of fair King Richard, scraped from Pomfret stones ;
Derives from heaven his quarrel and his cause ;
Tells them he doth bestride a bleeding land,
Gasping for life under great Bolingbroke ;
And more and less do flock to follow him.”*

His words had great effect upon the mind of the Earl,

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and forthwith messages were prepared to send to the Archbishop. Meanwhile the palace at York was the scene of a protracted consultation between the Archbishop, Lord Hastings, Lord Mowbray and their supporters. They knew that King Henry was face to face with many difficulties. The French were threatening him, Glendower was holding the Welsh Marches, and the movements of the Northern lords had caused him to detach a strong force from his army. Thus, scattered into three divisions, his soldiers could not bring their full strength to bear. If Northumberland threw in the weight of his power with the Archbishop the issue promised to be a favourable one, but Scroop was doubtful of the Earl. Lord Bardolph, who had arrived in York, could not give a definite assurance that he would unite with them, and suggested caution until the forces of Percy were actually united with those of the Archbishop. To move without their presence would only be to court disaster. Lord Bardolph was by nature a prudent man, and what he had seen of Northumberland in his sickness compelled him to counsel delay. In this strain, therefore, he gave his advice :

*“ When we mean to build,
We first survey the plot, then draw the model ;
And when we see the figure of the house,
Then must we rate the cost of the erection ;
Which if we find outweighs ability,
What do we then but draw anew the model
In fewer offices, or at least desist
To build at all ? Much more, in this great work,
Which is almost to pluck a kingdom down
And set another up, should we survey*

*The plot of situation and the model,
Consent upon a sure foundation,
Question surveyors, know our own estate,
How able such a work to undergo,
To weigh against his opposite ; or else
We fortify in paper and in figures,
Using the names of men instead of men :
Like one that draws the model of a house
Beyond his power to build it ; who, half through,
Gives o'er and leaves his part-created cost
A naked subject to the weeping clouds,
And waste for churlish winter's tyranny."*

His advice was full of wisdom, but Scroop and Mowbray determined to send further messages to the Earl, and in the meantime assemble their forces in and around Gaultree Forest, Yorkshire. Northumberland was now in his castle at Warkworth, and his indecision was being increased by the pleadings of his wife and daughter-in-law. They begged him to forsake the Archbishop and seek refuge in Scotland until the storm had blown over. He insisted that if he did so he would be forsworn, but they replied that formerly he had gone back upon his word, when he had not advanced to the assistance of his brave son Hotspur. Lady Percy saw his indecision and pressed her argument, and the Earl, although desiring to aid the Archbishop, finally resolved to go to Scotland and there await the issue.

In the meantime King Henry was in his palace at Westminster holding anxious consultations with his nobles. He had returned from Wales after a vain pursuit of Glendower, whose active mountaineers were expert in avoiding a conflict when it was not for their

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interest to fight. The King was suffering in his health. Anxiety had brought on sleeplessness, and prolonged deliberations had worn his body almost to a shadow. Falstaff was also in London, triumphant in the glory which he had snatched at Shrewsbury, and more intent than ever upon the joys of dissipation. Bardolph, his red-nosed follower, had been arrested by order of the Lord Chief Justice because of rioting. The Prince had commanded the release of Bardolph, and on the refusal of the Chief Justice had so far forgotten himself as to strike the judge as he sat upon the bench. For this the Lord Chief Justice ordered the arrest of Prince Henry, and committed him to prison. On the order of King Henry his son had been released, but Falstaff knew that the incident was not likely to be forgotten. One day, as the fat knight was walking along the street, his page told him that the Lord Chief Justice was approaching. The matter of the robbery on Gadshill had not been forgotten, and Falstaff knew that the Judge would be inclined to remind him of it. He therefore pretended to be deaf in one ear, and for a time evaded the questioning, but the Lord Chief Justice was insistent, and the knight tried what flattery would do. This failed also. Then Falstaff purposely twisted the meaning of the Justice and gave evasive but witty replies. He called himself a young man, and said that the aged could not be expected to appreciate the vagaries of youth. The Lord Chief Justice looked at him with a bitter smile and said : " Do you set down your name in the scroll of youth, that are written down old with all the characters of age ? Have you not a moist eye ? A dry hand ? A yellow check ? A white beard ? Is not your voice broken ? your wind short ? your chin double ?

your wit single ? and every part about you blasted with antiquity ? And will you yet call yourself young Fie, fie, fie, Sir John ! ”

“ The truth is,” said Falstaff, with a leer, “ I am only old in judgement and understanding ; and he that will caper with me for a thousand marks, let him lend me the money, and have at him. For the box of the ear that the Prince gave you, he gave it like a rude prince, and you took it like a sensible lord. I have checked him for it, and the young lion repents ; marry, not in ashes and sackcloth, but in new silk and old sack.”

“ Well,” returned the Lord Chief Justice, “ God send the Prince a better companion ! ”

“ God send the companion a better prince ! I cannot rid my hands of him. If ye will needs say I am an old man, you should give me rest. I would to God my name were not so terrible to the enemy as it is : I were better to be eaten to death with a rust than to be scoured to nothing with perpetual motion.”

Then the wily knight tried to borrow a thousand pounds from the Chief Justice, but the lawyer knew how to hold his money even if he could not grip his subtle adversary, and turned away. Falstaff went off, holding his head high and grumbling about poverty and the rapid consumption of his purse. He had only gone a few yards when he fell into the hands of some officers, who at the suit of Mistress Quickly, the hostess of the Boar’s Head Tavern, were waiting to arrest him for debt. Falstaff called upon Bardolph to draw his sword and strike the officers, and throw the hostess into the ditch. There was a struggle, and the Lord Chief Justice hearing the uproar, returned, calling upon the brawlers to keep the peace. He told Sir John that he ought to be

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ashamed of himself, and demanded to know why the knight had been arrested. Falstaff turned to the woman, who still clung to him, and asked the gross sum due by him to her.

“Marry, if thou wert an honest man,” said the angry dame, “thyself and the money too. Thou didst swear to me upon a parcel-gilt goblet, sitting in my Dolphin-chamber, at the round table, by a sea-coal fire, upon Wednesday in Wheeson week, when the Prince broke thy head for liking his father to a singing-man of Windsor, thou didst swear to me then, as I was washing thy wound, to marry me and make me my lady thy wife. Canst thou deny it? Did not goodwife Keech, the butcher’s wife, come in then and call me gossip Quickly? coming in to borrow a mess of vinegar; telling us she had a good dish of prawns; whereby thou didst desire to eat some; whereby I told thee they were ill for a green wound? And didst thou not, when she was gone down stairs, desire me to be no more so familiarity with such poor people; saying that ere long they should call me madam? And didst thou not kiss me and bid me fetch thee thirty shillings? I put thee now to thy book-oath: deny it, if thou canst.”

The officers still held Falstaff, and the Lord Chief Justice began to see that there was something in the woman’s complaint. Falstaff said that he was on urgent employment in the King’s affairs and urged that he should be set free. He was told to satisfy the poor woman.

Just then, Gower, a gentleman of the court, hurried along the street with a letter for the Lord Chief Justice. As he hastily perused it, the Chief Justice gave the wily Falstaff the opportunity he was looking for. He

knew well that if he could get Dame Quickly to himself for a few minutes he could persuade her to agree to anything. She was of an easy good nature, and could be beguiled by a flattering tongue. Besides, she had a great admiration for the reckless, laughing Falstaff. In a few moments he had half-won her to his side, and was urging her to lend him ten pounds as well as to withdraw the action and pay the officers.

"By this heavenly ground I tread on," said the hostess, "I must be fain to pawn both my plate and the tapestry of my dining-chambers."

But Falstaff made light of such a trifling matter as the pawning of her plate-tankards and the furnishings of her best room.

"Glasses, glasses, is the only drinking," said he with a laugh, "and for thy walls, a pretty slight drollery, or the story of the Prodigal, or the German hunting in water-work, is worth a thousand of these bed-hangings and these fly-bitten tapestries. Let it be ten pound, if thou canst. Come, an 'twere not for thy humours, there's not a better wench in England. Go, wash thy face, and draw the action. Come, thou must not be in this humour with me ; dost not know me ? come, come, I know thou wast set on to this."

"Pray thee, Sir John, let it be but twenty nobles : i' faith, I am loath to pawn my plate, so God save me, la !"

A few words more and Falstaff had won her over, and she had not only promised to draw the action and find the money but had also arranged for the knight and his companions to have a final merrymaking with her at the Boar's Head. As she hurried away Falstaff turned with a grimace of triumph to the Lord Chief

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Justice. He had emerged from his difficulties once again by practising on the easy-yielding nature of the credulous foolish woman, but the Lord Chief Justice made him feel that, after all, the triumph was a poor thing, for he said in scornful, caustic tones to the knight: "Now the Lord lighten thee! thou art a great fool," and brushed past him up the street. But Falstaff cared not one whit. He wrote a letter to Prince Henry and sent it by the hands of Bardolph. It ran as follows:

"Sir John Falstaff, knight, to the son of the king, nearest his father, Harry Prince of Wales, greeting.

"I will imitate the honourable Romans in brevity: I commend me to thee, I commend thee, and I leave thee. Be not too familiar with Poins; for he misuses thy favours so much, that he swears thou art to marry his sister Nell. Repent at idle times as thou mayest; and so, farewell.

"Thine, by yea and no, which is as much as to say, as thou usest him, Jack Falstaff with my familiars, John with my brothers and sisters, and Sir John with all Europe."

The Prince, in obedience to the word which he had given his father, and under the impulse of the amendment which had come into his life, was gradually moving away from Falstaff and his companions, but he determined for the last time to steal into the Boar's Head and see the knight at his farewell supper. Poins suggested that they should disguise themselves as serving men and wait upon the knight at table. They did so, and found the tavern a scene of uproarious merriment and drunken revelry. Falstaff was roaring out a drinking song. Bardolph was waving a wine cup in

the air, and the hostess and Mistress Doll Tearsheet were capering about the room in wild abandon. Pistol, a loud-mouthed, swaggering, blustering soldier, Falstaff's lieutenant, came to the tavern and demanded to see the knight. Doll Tearsheet detested Pistol, and swore that she would have nothing to do with such a poor, base, rascally, cheating, cut-purse rascal and stale juggler. She said that he lived on mouldy stewed prunes and dried cakes, and looked like his fare. Pistol roared out that he would run his sword into her, but Falstaff said that he would have no brawling, and told Bardolph to pitch Pistol down the stairs. Then he drew his own sword and made a dart at the swaggering soldier. There was a scuffle, and Falstaff chased the drunkard out of the room, and Pistol was thrown into the street. When the tumult was subsiding the Prince and Poins came in disguised as tapsters. The conversation soon turned upon Harry and Poins.

"Hang Poins," said Falstaff, with a hiccough, "he's a baboon! His wit's as thick as Tewksbury mustard; and the Prince himself is such another, the weight of a hair will turn the scales between their avoirdupois."

These words would have caused another disturbance, for Poins was hot-headed, but at that moment Mistress Quickly recognised the Prince and called out his name.

"Thou mad compound of majesty, thou art welcome. I knew thee," said Falstaff.

"Yea," replied the Prince, "you knew me, as you did when you ran away by Gadshill; you knew I was at your back, and spoke it on purpose to try my patience."

Poins swore that Falstaff had abused them both in the hearing of every one in the room.

"No abuse, Ned, i' the world; honest Ned, none.

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I dispraised him before the wicked, that the wicked might not fall in love with him ; in which doing I have done the part of a careful friend and a true subject, and thy father is to give me thanks for it. No abuse, Hal : none, Ned, none : no, faith, boys, none."

Further discussion was ended by Peto coming in to announce to the Prince that the King was awaiting him at Westminster because stirring news had come from the North, and that a dozen captains were knocking at tavern doors and asking every one for Sir John Falstaff. It was a time for action, not for drunken revelry :

" *By heaven, Poins,*" said the Prince, "*I feel me much to blame,
So idly to profane the precious time ;
When tempest of commotion, like the south
Borne with black vapour, doth begin to melt,
And drop upon our bare unarmed heads.
Give me my sword and cloak. Falstaff, good night.*"

The Prince hurried away, and his "good-night" meant farewell for ever to Falstaff and his revellers, for from that time Prince Henry had done with them, and his course was set upon lines of highest patriotism and noblest endeavour. Falstaff now marched into Gloucestershire, impressing men as he went along, and repeating the same devices for acquiring money which he had found so effective before the battle of Shrewsbury. He had halted before an old-fashioned country house which belonged to a companion of his earlier days, Robert Shallow, now a Justice of the Peace and the squire of the district, and gave notice that he wanted soldiers and was going to press a number to serve in the

war. Bardolph and another had been sent on to make the necessary preparations. Half a dozen men were required, and Ralph Mouldy, Simon Shadow, Thomas Wart, Francis Feeble, Peter Bulcalf and another were waiting to appear before the Justice. They were villagers of a grotesque type, and Falstaff made great fun out of their names and appearance. One had a cough and said that he thought he ought to be excused because of it, another was a woman's tailor, and a third was so thin that Falstaff said that he was just the man for the wars, for if he stood sideways the enemy would not be able to see him. Thomas Wart was so ragged and miserable that he looked as though his frame were built up on pins, and even the unscrupulous Falstaff realised that he was hardly worth troubling about. Each man had a reason why he should not be compelled to be a soldier, but Falstaff only acknowledged the effectiveness of one reason, and Bardolph knew how to extract that reason from their pockets. While the knight was having dinner with Justice Shallow, his follower received three pounds from Mouldy and Bulcalf, but the rest were unable to supply the needed money and thus were compelled to serve as recruits in Falstaff's company of tattered heroes. A light musket was put into the shaking hand of the valiant scarecrow Thomas Wart, and Bardolph shouted out some elementary orders. The jerky movements of the recruit made Falstaff roar with laughter, and even Justice Shallow saw that he was not performing the movements in the right way.

"He is not his craft's master," said the tottering old Justice, hobbling up to Wart and taking the musket from him, "he doth not do it right. I remember at

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Mile End Green, when I lay at Clement's Inn—I was then Sir Dagonet in Arthur's show—there was a little quiver fellow, and 'a would manage you his piece thus ; and 'a would about and about, and come you in and come you in ; 'rah, tah, tah' would 'a say ; 'bounce' would 'a say ; and away again would 'a go, and again would 'a come : I shall ne'er see such a fellow."

He danced about upon his spindle-shanks, thrusting the musket this way and that, hissing "rah, tah, tah" and "bounce" through his teeth until he lost all his breath and had to lean against a tree, where he puffed and panted, while Falstaff chuckled with huge delight.

The recruits at length were marshalled. Bardolph rapped out the order to march. Falstaff waved his hand to the admiring Justice and his cousin, Master Silence, and thus the valiant but shabby array marched off to the wars. When the hedge-row hid the Justice from view Falstaff amused himself by laughing and grimacing, and as he plodded after his recruits he commented upon his old acquaintance Robert Shallow.

"Lord, Lord, how subject we old men are to this vice of lying ! This same starved justice hath done nothing but prate to me of the wildness of his youth, and the feats he hath done about Turnbull Street ; and every third word a lie. I do remember him at Clement's Inn like a man made after supper of a cheese-paring : when 'a was naked, he was, for all the world, like a forked radish, with a head fantastically carved upon it with a knife ; a' was so forlorn, that his dimensions to any thick sight were invisible : a' was the very genius of famine. And now is this Vice's dagger become a squire, and talks as familiarly of John a Gaunt as if he had been

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sworn brother to him ; and I'll be sworn a' ne'er saw him but once in the Tilt-yard ; and then he burst his head for crowding among the marshal's men. I saw it, and told John a Gaunt he beat his own name ; for you might have thrust him and all his apparel into an eel-skin ; the case of a treble hautboy was a mansion for him, a court : and now he has land and beefs. Well, I'll be acquainted with him, if I return ; and it shall go hard but I will make him a philosopher's two stones to me : if the young dace be a bait for the old pike, I see no reason in the law of nature but I may snap at him. Let time shape, and there an end." He strode along the lane and snapped his fingers, and the reckless old spendthrift was as lighthearted as a boy. In his careless merriment the ancient rake was a striking contrast to King Henry IV., upon whose business he was wending his way to Yorkshire. The King was in his palace at Westminster, and a heavy, busy day had ushered in a weary, sleepless night. It was past one o'clock and he had tried in vain to get the refreshment of sleep. Rising from his bed he had flung a furred gown around him and now stood at the window, looking out upon the quiet night. The great stars shone above him, and the murmurs of the crowded city of London, but a mile or so distant, had almost died away. A few lights gleamed upon the river as the tall-masted barges dropped down with the tide, but on the great waterway silence brooded and the current ran noiselessly on its way to the sea. The King stood for a while, and from his tired heart a deep sigh of utter weariness came :

*" How many thousand of my poorest subjects
Are at this hour asleep ! O sleep, O gentle sleep,*

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☞ *Nature's soft-nurse, how have I frighted thee,
 That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,
 And steep my senses in forgetfulness ?
 Why rather, sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,
 Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee,
 And hush'd with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber
 Than in the perfumed chambers of the great,
 Under the canopies of costly state,
 And lull'd with sound of sweetest melody ?
 O thou dull god, why liest thou with the vile
 In loathsome beds, and leavest the kingly couch
 A watch-case or a common 'larum-bell ?
 Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
 Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains
 In cradle of the rude imperious surge,
 And in the visitation of the winds,
 Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
 Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them
 With deafening clamour in the slippery clouds,
 That, with the hurly, death itself awakes ?
 Canst thou, O partial sleep, give thy repose
 To the wet sea-boy in an hour so rude ;
 And in the calmest and most stillest night,
 With all appliances and means to boot,
 Deny it to a king ? Then happy low, lie down !
 Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."*

Steps were heard in the corridor, and the Earls of Warwick and Surrey entered the chamber of the King. They had come in obedience to his summons. Henry well remembered the prophecy of King Richard concerning the proud Northumberland, that one day he would prove a fatal enemy to the continued success

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of Bolingbroke, and he feared that that time had now drawn near. Turning to the Earls, King Henry said :

*“ O God ! that one might read the book of fate,
And see the revolution of the times
Make mountains level, and the continent
Weary of solid firmness, melt itself
Into the sea ! and, other times, to see
The beachy girdle of the ocean
Too wide for Neptune’s hips ; how chances mock,
And changes fill the cup of alteration
With divers liquors ! O, if this were seen,
The happiest youth, viewing his progress through,
What perils past, what crosses to ensue,
Would shut the book, and sit him down and die.”*

They tried to cheer him, but Henry knew, by his increasing weakness, that a mightier adversary than Northumberland was in the field against him, and that Death would ere long draw near to touch him with a cold hand and tell him that his day of ambitious striving had reached its close at last.

But, though he knew it not, Fortune was favouring him in the North. Percy had not joined the forces of the Archbishop, Mowbray, Hastings and the rest ; and Prince John of Lancaster and the Earl of Westmoreland had now reached a point within striking distance of their army in the Gaultree Forest. Westmoreland was sent to offer terms, and a meeting was arranged between the leaders of the rival forces. Prince John had decided to endeavour to induce the Archbishop to disperse his followers. He had little hope that the plot would succeed, but was determined to try subtlety before they

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drew the sword. If the Archbishop were simple enough to fall into the snare, Lancaster made up his mind to deal sternly with the rebels. When he came to the conference the Prince addressed his adversaries in gentle, courteous terms :

*“ Good day to you, gentle lord archbishop ;
And so to you, Lord Hastings, and to all.
My Lord of York, it better show'd with you
When that your flock, assembled by the bell,
Encircled you to hear with reverence
Your exposition on the holy text,
Than now to see you here an iron man,
Cheering a rout of rebels with your drum,
Turning the word to sword and life to death.
That man that sits within a monarch's heart,
And ripens in the sunshine of his favour,
Would he abuse the countenance of the king,
Alack, what mischiefs might he set abroad
In shadow of such greatness ! with you, lord bishop,
It is even so. Who hath not heard it spoken
How deep you were within the books of God ?
To us the speaker in his parliament ;
To us the imagined voice of God himself ;
The very opener and intelligencer
Between the grace, the sanctities of heaven
And our dull workings. O, who shall believe
But you misuse the reverence of your place,
Employ the countenance and grace of heaven,
As a false favourite doth his prince's name,
In deeds dishonourable ? You have ta'en up,
Under the counterfeited zeal of God,
The subjects of his substitute, my father,*

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*And both against the peace of heaven and him
Have here up-swarm'd them."*

The Archbishop stated the reasons why he had taken up arms, and on the promise of the Prince that all should be redressed, consented to disband his forces if the Prince would send his own army away. This was done, and the rebel army rapidly dispersed, leaving Scroop, Hastings, and the leaders alone with the Prince.

But the royalist army had only withdrawn a short distance, and when Lancaster knew that he had his enemies in his power he ordered their arrest and execution. Some of the Archbishop's following made a show of resistance, but the soldiers of the King swept them away and the rebellion was broken. News was sent to King Henry that his enemies were defeated, and at the same time word came that Northumberland and Lord Bar-dolph, with a great army of Scots and English, had also been overthrown by the valiant sheriff of York-shire.

The King was in the Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey when the good news came. His long night of anxiety was now dispelled by the sun of good fortune, but his weak frame could not bear up against the joy which rushed upon him. The blood surged to his brain, he gave a gasping cry and his amazed courtiers saw him fall heavily to the floor. They picked him up and laid him gently upon a couch, and word was sent to summon his son, the Prince of Wales. Then they took him to his bed, and when he had recovered consciousness, at his request, they placed the crown of England on his pillow and left him to his slumbers.

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While he was sleeping quietly the Prince entered the room; he started when he saw the white, worn face, and bent to listen to the breathing of the King. It was so slight that a feather upon the pillow was not even moved by it. The Prince bent nearer and tried to arouse the sleeper. But he did not stir, his breathing had ceased, and young Harry thought that he was dead. He saw the crown upon the pillow and lifted it and held it in his hand :

*“ O polish'd perturbation ! golden care !
 That keep'st the ports of slumber open wide
 To many a watchful night ! sleep with it now !
 Yet not so sound and half so deeply sweet
 As he whose brow with homely biggin bound
 Snores out the watch of night. O majesty !
 When thou dost pinch thy bearer, thou dost sit
 Like a rich armour worn in heat of day,
 That scalds with safety. By his gates of breath
 There lies a downy feather which stirs not :
 Did he suspire, that light and weightless down
 Perforce must move. My gracious lord ! my father !
 This sleep is sound indeed : this is a sleep,
 That from this golden rigol hath divorced
 So many English Kings. Thy due from me
 Is tears and heavy sorrows of the blood,
 Which nature, love, and filial tenderness,
 Shall, O dear father, pay thee plenteously :
 My due from thee is this imperial crown,
 Which, as immediate from thy place and blood,
 Derives itself to me. Lo, here it sits,
 Which God shall guard : and put the world's whole
 strength*

*Into one giant arm, it shall not force
This lineal honour from me : this from thee
Will I mine leave, as 'tis left to me."*

He placed the crown upon his brow, and with another look upon the still face of his father crept softly from the room. Presently the King stirred upon his pillow. Death had not yet come to him. His eyes wandered round the room and then sought the crown which had been beside him when he fell asleep. He missed it, and called feebly to his attendant nobles. Lord Warwick, Gloucester, Clarence and others entered, and from them the King learned that the crown must have been removed by the Prince of Wales. They sought the young man, and found him weeping in an antechamber. His grief was made yet more bitter by the remembrance of his past follies and misdeeds, and the recklessness which had been a constant sorrow to the dead father he was mourning. In amazement he started up when they told him that the King still lived, and hastened to his bedside. They left him alone with his father.

"I never thought to hear you speak again," he said with trembling voice, while the tears rolled down his cheeks.

*"Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought :
I stay too long by thee, I weary thee.
Dost thou so hunger for mine empty chair
That thou wilt needs invest thee with my honours
Before thy hour be ripe ? O foolish youth !
Thou seek'st the greatness that will overwhelm thee.
Stay but a little ; for my cloud of dignity
Is held from falling with so weak a wind
That it will quickly drop : my day is dim.*

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*Thou hast stolen that which after some few hours
Were thine without offence."*

The poor King, in the bitterness of his sorrow at what he thought was the callous haste of an unworthy but well-loved son, gave his tongue freedom of speech, and the Prince, once more grievously misunderstood, could make no reply. At length when the King paused, young Harry spake :

*" O, pardon me, my liege ! but for my tears,
The moist impediments unto my speech,
I had forestall'd this dear and deep rebuke,
Ere you with grief had spoke and I had heard
The course of it so far. There is your crown
And He that wears the crown immortally
Long guard it yours."*

He told the King how he had been mistaken in his thought, and how rejoiced he was to know that his father still lived and might yet govern the subjects whose love was all his own, and as he heard the story the sad heart of King Henry beat with an exquisite joy. He drew his son to him, and while he had strength told him that by indirect and crooked ways he himself had marched to snatch the crown with boisterous hand, and how difficult it had been to maintain that which he had seized. He counselled Harry to emulate the stirring exploits of those soldier Kings whose victorious standards had waved over many a hard fought field in foreign lands, and with these words he sank back upon his pillow and closed his eyes in weariness. Lord Warwick and Prince John of Lancaster entered, and the King revived and said : " Doth any name particular belong to that lodging where I first did swoon ? "

“ ’Tis called Jerusalem, my noble lord,” replied the Earl of Warwick.

At the name Jerusalem, the King remembered all his hopes of a Crusade to the Holy Sepulchre, and he smiled and said :

*“ Laud be to God ! even there my life must end.
It hath been prophesied to me many years,
I should not die but in Jerusalem ;
Which vainly I supposed the Holy Land :
But bear me to that chamber ; there I’ll lie ;
In that Jerusalem shall Harry die.”*

They bore the King with reverent, gentle footsteps to the Jerusalem Chamber of the ancient Abbey, and there in a few hours his time-wearied spirit found rest, and the troubled monarch entered into the unbroken peace of the kingdom which lies beyond the shadows. His son, the Prince of Wales, ascended the throne under the title of King Henry the Fifth, and over all the land the couriers flew to proclaim that Henry Bolingbroke was dead, and that Henry Monmouth reigned in his stead.

In a lovely orchard in Gloucestershire a number of gentlemen were seated under the apple-trees. Justice Shallow, his cousin Silence, Sir John Falstaff and Bardolph had been making merry, for on the dispersion of the royal army Falstaff had remembered the foolish old Justice and had returned to make some profit out of him. They had all feasted and drunk merrily, and even the quiet Silence had been stimulated to jollity. His tongue wagged freely, and every now and then he burst out into maudlin songs, which the wine had stirred up from the depths of his dull brain. Nothing

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seemed to restrain him, and Falstaff listened to his vapourings with great delight. When Shallow spoke, Silence capped his speech with a verse :

*“ Be merry, be merry, my wife has all ;
For women are shrews, both short and tall :
'Tis merry in hall when beards wag all,
And welcome merry Shrove-tide.
Be merry, be merry.”*

Their revelling was interrupted by the hurried entrance of Falstaff's lieutenant, the swaggering Pistol. He had great tidings to announce of the accession of King Henry V. Falstaff leaped to his feet when he heard the news. He ordered his horse to be saddled, and bade the old Justice accompany him to London. He had already tried to borrow a thousand pounds from Shallow and this settled the matter, for he was now able to promise the old man that he should be made a lord. “ The laws of England are at my command,” shouted Falstaff in his joy ; “ blessed are they that have been my friends ; and woe to my Lord Chief Justice.”

He thought that his influence over young Henry would be so great that he would be able to mould him as he desired. But Henry had already asked the pardon of the Lord Chief Justice, whom he had formerly flouted, and had determined to show by his altered and kingly demeanour that he had parted for ever with the old life of the tavern and the street. His coronation had been fixed to take place in the noble Abbey of Westminster, and on the day a great crowd awaited his coming. It was a glorious afternoon, and the bright sun shone down upon the thousands of citizens who awaited to acclaim the newly-crowned

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King. Sir John Falstaff, Justice Shallow, Bardolph, and Pistol had pushed their way to the front of the crowded line, and travel-stained and dusty, were standing in eager expectancy to give a greeting to their old companion in revelry.

“God save thy grace, King Hal! my royal Hal!” roared Falstaff, when the King appeared.

“The heavens thee guard and keep, most royal imp of fame,” said Pistol in his most swaggering tones.

The King started, and said something to the Lord Chief Justice who marched near him. But Falstaff was not daunted. Pushing his way to the King he said: “My King! my Jove! I speak to thee, my heart!”

The King halted, and a silence like death fell upon the crowd. Every eye was turned upon the huge figure of Falstaff. When King Henry spoke, his words went like a dagger to the heart of the knight:

*“I know thee not, old man: fall to thy prayers;
How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!
I have long dream’d of such a kind of man,
So surfeit-swell’d, so old, and so profane;
But, being awaked, I do despise my dream.
Make less thy body hence, and more thy grace;
Leave gormandizing; know the grave doth gape
For thee thrice wider than for other men.
Reply not to me with a fool-born jest:
Presume not that I am the thing I was;
For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,
That I have turn’d away my former self;
So will I those that kept me company.
When thou dost hear I am as I have been,
Approach me, and thou shalt be as thou wast,*

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*The tutor and the feeder of my riots :
Till then, I banish thee, on pain of death,
As I have done the rest of my misleaders,
Not to come near our person by ten mile.
For competence of life I will allow you,
That lack of means enforce you not to evil :
And, as we hear you do reform yourselves,
We will, according to your strengths and qualities,
Give you advancement. Be it your charge, my lord,
To see perform'd the tenour of our word.
Set on."*

The procession, interrupted for the moment by this incident, again swept through the cheering crowds, leaving Falstaff, Shallow, and Pistol amazed and overwhelmed by the words of the King. Falstaff knew, so far as the old relationship was concerned, that his intercourse with the King was broken for ever, but he put a bold face on the matter, and tried to comfort the disappointed Justice. He invited him to dinner, and said that the King's sternness was only a pretence. The evening would prove it to be so, for he knew that Harry would send for him and all would be right. The knight had not yet appreciated the significance of the fact that the Lord Chief Justice was now entrusted with the management of his relations with the King.

He was soon to understand what this meant, and in the most unpleasant fashion. The Prince of Lancaster and the Chief Justice returned to the place where the group had listened to the King's words. Officers accompanied them. They were ordered to arrest Sir John Falstaff and all his company and convey them forthwith to the Fleet prison. Falstaff tried to speak

but was silenced by a curt speech from the Chief Justice. "I will hear you soon. Take them away." Poor old Justice Shallow was too amazed to say anything, Pistol muttered a tag of Latin philosophy, and Falstaff accompanied the officers with something like despair in his heart, for he now found himself in a position from which his natural ability and craft could not extricate him, and the knowledge of his helplessness was bitter as worm-wood. He plodded along through the busy streets, crowded with the rejoicing citizens, but when the heavy gate of the Fleet closed behind him it was significant of that heavier portal which had now closed upon his life, and not the least bitter to the heart of Sir John was the reflection that the subtle and brilliant cleverness of one of the ablest of men could be contemptuously thrown aside and committed to the dust of a prison-yard; that the ready wit and joviality of a prince of good companions could be easily and profitably dispensed with, because that in life there are greater things than a splendid unworthiness, and roads upon which the feet of true and honourable men alone may tread.

King Henry the Fifth

IN the year 1360 King John of France and King Edward III. of England had concluded a very important treaty which was known by the name of the Treaty of Bretigny. In it the English possessions in France were stated to be Gascony, Guienne, Poitou, and the town of Calais. But by the time of the death of Edward, the whole of the territory had been lost, with the exception of Bayonne, Bordeaux, a portion of Picardy around Cressy, and Calais. Edward had never given up his pretensions to the sovereignty of Guienne and Gascony, although the growing power of the French kingdom had made it impossible for him to enforce his claims. Normandy had been lost, with the exception of the Channel Islands. Thus the great possessions of the Norman and Angevin Kings of England had almost entirely passed out of the hands of their successors.

But King Edward had also maintained that he was the rightful heir to the French crown, on the ground that though the Salic Law, which governed the succession in France, excluded females, it did not exclude their male descendants. He claimed to be the heir through his mother Isabel, who was the daughter of Philip IV. ; but the succession had passed to the younger brother of Philip, and when Henry V. ascended the throne of England, King Charles VI. of Valois was ruling as

King of France. Now Henry Bolingbroke had married Joan of Navarre, who was a direct descendant of Philip IV., and in this way two branches of the children of this monarch were united in the person of Henry of Monmouth.

Despite the fact that neither his father nor himself was the true heir to the English throne by lineal right, Henry determined to revive the old claim of Edward III., and to assert the rights which were supposed to have come to him through Joan of Navarre. France at this time, on account of the occasional madness of Charles VI., was being disturbed by factions, and fierce quarrels had arisen among the French princes. On one side were the Dauphin, the Duke of Orleans, and the southern lords, and on the other John the Fearless of Burgundy, whose cause was supported by Paris and other great towns. There seemed to be a favourable opportunity for a powerful King of England to enforce any claims he might have. The mind of Henry was turned that way, and it only required a little impetus to launch him against the French. This came from two directions. In the English Parliament which met at Leicester in the second year of his reign, 1414, a Bill had been introduced in which it was proposed to place under the King's charge all the landed property in England which belonged to foreign ecclesiastics and monasteries over seas. It was felt that English wealth derived from English lands might be used against England if the control of it were in alien hands.

Naturally, the proposed Act caused much disquiet among ecclesiastics, and many important conferences were held. The Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking to the Bishop of Ely, thus expressed his mind upon the matter :

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*" If it pass against us,
We lose the better half of our possession ;
For all the temporal lands, which men devout
By testament have given to the Church,
Would they strip from us ; being valued thus :
As much as would maintain, to the king's honour,
Full fifteen earls and fifteen hundred knights,
Six thousand and two hundred good esquires ;
And, to relief of lazars and weak age,
Of indigent faint souls past corporal toil,
A hundred almshouses right well supplied ;
And to the coffers of the king beside,
A thousand pounds by the year : "*

It was a magnificent possession which was thus held by alien representatives of the Church, and if the whole were placed in the hands of the King it meant a very considerable increase of wealth and power to him. If it were possible to divert the monarch's attention to something which promised to be far more profitable, the Archbishop felt that he would be doing the Church good service. He knew that the question of the French succession was one upon which Henry held very definite views, and as the Churchman had made a long study of political problems, he felt that if called upon he would be able to expound the Salic Law to the satisfaction of the King, and the ultimate profit of the Church. A war with France, to recover the lost possessions, would be popular, especially as the King had made himself a favourite with all the people. Since his accession Henry had broken away from all the evil influences of his earlier days and was everywhere acclaimed as one full of grace and fair regard, and

a true lover of the Church. Speaking of the wonderful change in him, the Archbishop of Canterbury said :

*“ The breath no sooner left his father’s body,
But that his wildness, mortified in him,
Seem’d to die too ; yea, at that very moment,
Consideration like an angel came
And whipp’d the offending Adam out of him,
Leaving his body as a paradise,
To envelope and contain celestial spirits.
Never was such a sudden scholar made ;
Never came reformation in a flood,
With such a heady currance, scouring faults ;
Nor never Hydra-headed wilfulness
So soon did lose his seat, and all at once,
As in this king.”*

The two Bishops recalled how the King’s hours used formerly to be filled with riots, banquets, sports and vain courses, and wondered that in so short a time he had learned how to converse with statesmen upon questions of highest moment, and with the most experienced soldiers upon the art of war. The Bishop of Ely acknowledged that the change was marvellous, but accounted for it by saying, in homely terms :

*“ The strawberry grows underneath the nettle,
And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best
Neighbour’d by fruit of baser quality :
And so the prince obscured his contemplation
Under the veil of wildness ; which, no doubt,
Grew like the summer grass, fastest by night,
Unseen, yet crecive in his faculty.”*

This was a very charitable and courtly explanation

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of the wild revelries and hard drinking which used to be indulged in by the Prince when he led the prodigals at the Boar's Head Tavern.

An important Council had been summoned for the hour of four, in the King's Presence Chamber, and Henry entered with his brothers Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, and John of Lancaster, now Duke of Bedford ; his uncle, the Duke of Exeter, and the Earls of Warwick and Westmoreland. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely had been summoned to give their opinion upon the question of the operation of the Salic Law in so far as King Henry's claim to the French crown was concerned. An embassy from France was even now awaiting an audience with the King, but it was allowed to wait until the Archbishop had spoken.

"*My learned lord,*" said the King, "*we pray you to proceed*

And justly and religiously unfold

Why the law Salique that they have in France

Or should, or should not, bar us in our claim :

And God forbid, my dear and faithful lord,

That you should fashion, wrest, or bow your reading,

Or nicely charge your understanding soul

With opening titles miscreate, whose right

Suits not in native colours with the truth ;

For God doth know how many now in health

Shall drop their blood in approbation

Of what your reverence shall incite us to.

Therefore take heed how you impawn our person,

How you awake our sleeping sword of war :

We charge you, in the name of God, take heed."

Thus enjoined, the Archbishop replied that there was only one bar against the King's claim to France, namely the law of Pharamond which said, "*In terram Salicam mulieres ne succedant*," "No woman shall succeed in Salique land." But, argued the Archbishop, the land Salique was in Germany, between the rivers Elbe and Saale, and not in France at all, and the French did not possess the Salique territory until four hundred years after Pharamond had lived. And further, King Pepin, Hugh Capet, King Lewis had all succeeded in right of and by the female line, therefore there could be no bar to Henry of England.

"May I with right and conscience make this claim?" repeated the King.

*"The sin upon my head, dread sovereign!
For in the book of Numbers is it writ,
When the man dies, let the inheritance
Descend unto the daughter. Gracious lord,
Stand for your own; unwind your bloody flag;
Look back into your mighty ancestors:
Go, my dread lord, to your great-grandsire's tomb,
From whom you claim; invoke his warlike spirit,
And your great-uncle's, Edward the Black Prince,
Who on the French ground play'd a tragedy,
Making defeat on the full power of France,
Whiles his most mighty father on a hill
Stood smiling to behold his lion's whelp
Forage in blood of French nobility.
O noble English, that could entertain
With half their forces the full pride of France
And let another half stand laughing by,
All out of work and cold for action!"*

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The Bishop of Ely and the nobles who stood around added their approval to the opinion expressed by Canterbury, and Henry, although gratified that his own desires were thus shown to be based upon right foundations, still professed to have some hesitation because of the known animosity of Scotland to his kingdom and himself. If he were fighting in France he was sure that the turbulent Scots would swoop down upon the northern part of his dominions and work great mischief before he could return to deal with them. To this the Archbishop agreed, and quoted an old saying :

*“ If that you will France win,
Then with Scotland first begin.”*

but, with the Bishop of Exeter, he went on to suggest that the power of England should be divided into four, one part of which, the armed hand, should accompany the King on his great adventure to France, while the remaining three parts, the advised head, should stay at home to defend the country from any invader who threatened it. This was an example taught by highest authorities and one which was calculated to save England from any trouble such as that apprehended by the King.

*“ Therefore doth heaven divide
The state of man in divers functions,
Setting endeavour in continual motion ;
To which is fixed, as an aim or butt,
Obedience : for so work the honey-bees,
Creatures that by a rule in nature teach
The act of order to a peopled kingdom.*

*They have a king and officers of sorts ;
Where some, like magistrates, correct at home,
Others, like merchants, venture trade abroad,
Others, like soldiers, armed in their stings,
Make boot upon the summer's velvet buds,
Which pillage they with merry march bring home
To the tent-royal of their emperor ;
Who, busied in his majesty, surveys
The singing masons building roofs of gold,
The civil citizens kneading up the honey,
The poor mechanic porters crowding in
Their heavy burdens at his narrow gate.
The sad-eyed justice, with his surly hum,
Delivering o'er to executors pale
The lazy yawning drone. I this infer,
That many things, having full reference
To one consent, may work contrariously :
As many arrows, loosed several ways,
Come to one mark ; as many ways meet in one town ;
As many fresh streams meet in one salt sea ;
As many lines close in the dial's centre ;
So may a thousand actions, once afoot,
End in one purpose, and be all well borne
Without defeat. Therefore to France, my liege."*

Thus eloquently the Archbishop urged the King, and now it only required the second impetus to complete what the Bishops and nobles desired. The ambassadors from France were summoned to meet the King. It was soon made clear that their words were intended to be an insult. After hinting at the youthfulness of Henry and the wild sportiveness of his early days, they said that they had brought a tun of tennis-balls as a present

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to him from the Dauphin, and hoped that he would amuse his leisure with a harmless sport rather than venture upon a play which meant the handling of spears and swords and the meeting of valiant soldiers. The warlike spirit of the King was fully aroused by this poor attempt at a merry jest, he therefore dismissed the ambassadors with scant ceremony, and threatened that he would make the Dauphin blush for his cynical mockery. But the emissaries of France had been in secret intercourse with three highly-placed and powerful English nobles, Richard, Earl of Cambridge, Lord Scroop of Masham, and Sir Thomas Grey of Northumberland, and had bribed them to assassinate the King before he could set sail for France. These three nobles were in the full confidence of Henry, Lord Scroop being one of his most trusted friends, a man who bore the key of his counsels and was spoken of as one who knew the bottom of his soul. They hid the secret of their treachery, however, and while the soldiers of England were emulating each other in their anxiety to be chosen for the expedition to France, quietly matured their plans for the murder of the King and the setting aside of the House of Lancaster.

Fortunately, information of the plot was laid before the King, and steps were at once taken to snare the conspirators. At a great gathering in Southampton, while the soldiers were assembling to embark, Henry, after exchanging compliments with his would-be assassins, and asking them if they thought it would be wise for him to release a man who had been arrested for railing against the King, boldly challenged them with their treachery and ordered their arrest. In a flow of bitter words he upbraided them for their conspiracy,

and showed that he had determination enough to crush the most powerful opponent.

*“ God quit you in His mercy ! Hear your sentence.
You have conspired against our royal person,
Join’d with an enemy proclaim’d, and from his coffers
Received the golden earnest of our death ;
Wherein you would have sold your king to slaughter,
His princes and his peers to servitude,
His subjects to oppression and contempt,
And his whole kingdom into desolation.
Touching our person seek we no revenge ;
But we our kingdom’s safety must so tender,
Whose ruin you have sought, that to her laws
We do deliver you. Get you therefore hence,
Poor miserable wretches, to your death :
The taste whereof, God of His mercy give
You patience to endure, and true repentance
Of all your dear offences ! ”*

The treacherous nobles had now seen the enormity of their actions and were overwhelmed with sorrow, and so, in penitence, they were led away by the soldiers to prepare for death.

The projected invasion of France had aroused the warlike spirit among the people, even as it had awakened the ambitions of the nobles, and in addition to Englishmen, stalwart soldiers from Wales, Scotland, and Ireland flocked to the standard of King Henry. Bardolph, Nym, and even Falstaff’s page-boy furbished up their weapons and made ready to depart. The swaggering Pistol had married Mistress Quickly, and was now engaged in an occupation which suited him much better than fighting, but he determined to become one of the

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invading army. He hoped to dodge perils and make some profit out of the plunder of the battle-fields.

Poor old Sir John Falstaff had never recovered from the shock of his rejection by the King and imprisonment in the Fleet, and now he lay, racked with pain and fever, in one of Dame Quickly's rooms above the tavern. He could hear the laughter and revelry of the tavern haunTERS as they gambled and fought in the taprooms beneath, and from time to time his ears caught the sound of the ribald chorus as it was trolled out in drunken merriment. His once-powerful mind had almost given way, and he lay with a feeble, vacant smile upon his lips, while his thin fingers fumbled aimlessly with the sheets, and his fancy strayed to flower-strewn meadows. He used to babble, as a child murmurs, of green fields and quiet nooks beneath the trees or beside the streams, but sometimes his voice would rise in an agonised appeal and he would cry out, "God, God, God," and stretch out his hands as though he prayed. His feet were always cold, and he would beg for something to be thrown over him in order that he might have some warmth and comfort. His old companions would sometimes creep up the stairs and stand upon the threshold of his room, and look at his thin white face and trembling hands, and then steal back again, with hearts solemnised for the moment, to the cheery rooms where the revellers were gathered at their sack. Somehow they felt that it was not easy for them to find a word of comfort for the lonely, dying man. Mistress Quickly, coming in to smooth his pillow, used to see him playing idly with his fingers and smiling at them, as a baby does ; she would tuck him in and try to say a few words of cheer, but the sad unseeing eyes of the old knight seemed to be

looking at something far away, and he would babble again of the green fields, and repeat his yearning cry of "God, God, God." She told him that he should not think of God, and hoped that there was no need for Falstaff to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet, but still the knight, in his sore trouble, remembered and called upon God. Slowly the day waned and the dark shadows crept into the room; the great river, which rolled upon its course not many yards away, was running to the sea, and soon the solemn bells tolled out the hour of midnight. The sound was caught up and re-echoed from many steeples on both sides of the river, the last song of the reveller died upon the night air, a few half-drunken farewells were shouted as boon companions separated in the dimly-lighted street, and then quietness reigned.

Mistress Quickly stood silently in a dark corner of the room where Falstaff lay and tried to catch a glimpse of his face. His hands were at rest now, a smile lay upon his lips, and he looked so peaceful and beautiful in the dim light that the woman thought of a little innocent child in his white christening robe when the solemn priest blesses him in the name of the Saviour, and gives him his name. She touched him and found that he was as cold as a stone, and then she realised that the time-worn body of the old knight had sunk into its last, long rest, and that his soul had passed away to God.

Next morning Bardolph, Nym, Pistol, and the page set out for Staines, on the way to Southampton, and before many days had gone by had embarked and were sailing across the Channel to the coasts of Normandy, where the strongly defended city of Harfleur was bidding defiance to the fleet and soldiers of King Henry.

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The French King had summoned his highest nobles to a conference, for he knew that many parts of France were ill-defended, and he had reason to fear that the poor opinion entertained of Henry by the Dauphin was not well-founded. This King who led the English was no vain, giddy, shallow, dissolute youth, but one who would doubtless prove himself to be a worthy successor of that heroic stock which had struck France at Cressy and Poitiers.

When the English ambassadors came and craved an audience in the name of King Henry, the French monarch, despite the jeering pleasantries of the Dauphin, would not venture upon a reply off-hand, but promised that after a night's thought he would give an answer to the English demands. He had no doubts concerning the right of his own succession to the French throne and did not mean to give way, but his respect for young King Henry made him resolve upon delay.

The English fleet had swiftly crossed the sea, and the soldiers landed at a place called Chef de Caux, near Harfleur, at the mouth of the river Seine. Here a camp of nearly thirty thousand men was formed, and preparations made for breaking through the strong walls of Harfleur. Although it was the month of September the weather was wet and cold, and the men in the camp soon suffered from various diseases. Dysentery and fever broke out, reducing the force so much that before October the English army numbered no more than some seven thousand men. The engines used in the siege threw their missiles against the walls, and mines and countermines were dug. Captain Macmorris, a valiant Irishman, was in command of the miners, and Captain Fluellen, a Welshman, and Captain Jamy, a hot-

headed Scot, served with him under Sir Thomas Erpingham.

Fluellen spoke English with a curious Welsh accent, and as he was a man who prided himself on his knowledge and observance of the most ancient approved methods of warfare, he was constantly getting into difficulties with the Irishman and the Scot. The Duke of Gloucester had placed Macmorris in command of the mining operations, but Fluellen said that the Irishman was an ass. "I will verify as much in his beard: he has no more directions in the true disciplines of the wars, look you, of the Roman disciplines, than is a puppy-dog." Holding this opinion it was natural to expect that quarrels would arise between the two, and when they did the Scotch captain was only too delighted to increase the dispeace, for he was mortally afraid of quietness and loved a broil.

Bardolph and his companions did more shouting than fighting, but were always to be found where there was a chance of plunder or drink. Bardolph stole a lute-case and carried it for twelve leagues and then sold it for three half-pence, and Nym and Bardolph stole a fire-shovel, which showed that they loved stealing for its own sake rather than for its rewards. When a huge breach had been made in the walls of the city both Bardolph and Pistol shouted, "On, on, on, to the breach!" but they did not venture themselves and would not have gone near if Captain Fluellen had not discovered them and forced them before him at the point of his sword. The soldiers rushed forward with their pikes and scaling-ladders and dashed again and again upon the death-dealing weapons of the French, but they could not break into the town. The Dukes of Exeter, Bedford,

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and Gloucester cheered them on, and at length King Henry sprang to his place at their head, and waving his sword and pointing to the crumbling walls of the city, cried out in ringing tones :

*“ Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more ;
Or close the wall up with our English dead.
In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
As modest stillness and humility ;
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Then imitate the action of the tiger ;
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
Disguise fair nature with hard-favour'd rage ;
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect ;
Let it pry through the portage of the head
Like the brass cannon ; let the brow o'erwhelm it
As fearfully as doth a galled rock
O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,
Swill'd with the wild and wasteful ocean.
Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide,
Hold hard the breath and bend up every spirit
To his full height. On, on, you noblest English,
Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof !
Fathers that, like so many Alexanders,
Have in these parts from morn till even fought,
And sheathed their swords for lack of argument :
Dishonour not your mothers ; now attest
That those whom you call'd fathers did beget you.
Be copy now to men of grosser blood,
And teach them how to war. And you, good yeomen,
Whose limbs were made in England, show us here
The mettle of your pasture ; let us swear
That you are worth your breeding ; which I doubt not ;*

*For there is none of you so mean and base,
That hath not noble lustre in your eyes.
I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,
Straining upon the start. The game's afoot :
Follow your spirit, and upon this charge
Cry ' God for Harry, England, and Saint George.' ”*

A crash of cannon drowned his words, a huge mine exploded, masonry tumbled from the walls, and with a wild rush the soldiers flung themselves once again at the breach. A trumpet sounded and white flags fluttered from the town. The Governor desired a parley, and soon Harfleur surrendered and the Duke of Bedford took possession and held it in the name of King Henry of England.

With only a night's rest the King determined to press on with his sorely reduced army, leaving Bedford with enough men to hold Harfleur. Passing along the coast of Normandy Henry led his men to Fécamp and Abbeville, thence turning south to Amiens and Nesle and then striking north by Peronne on the way to Calais. It was the twenty-fourth day of October when his tired and almost famished remnant of an army encamped outside the village of Frevent, about forty-five miles from Calais.

But now the French were hot upon the chase, and with an army of nearly 82,000 men the Constable of France and the Dauphin, with the greater and lesser nobles of the kingdom, took possession of the fords of the river Somme, and threatened the English with a terrible destruction. Never was an army in so difficult a position, and it was the common thought that the English would be annihilated. Certainly the French

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knights entertained no doubt upon the matter, and as they feasted in the royal pavilion they made many a witty jest at the expense of the starving enemy, whose dim watch-fires could be seen across the fields.

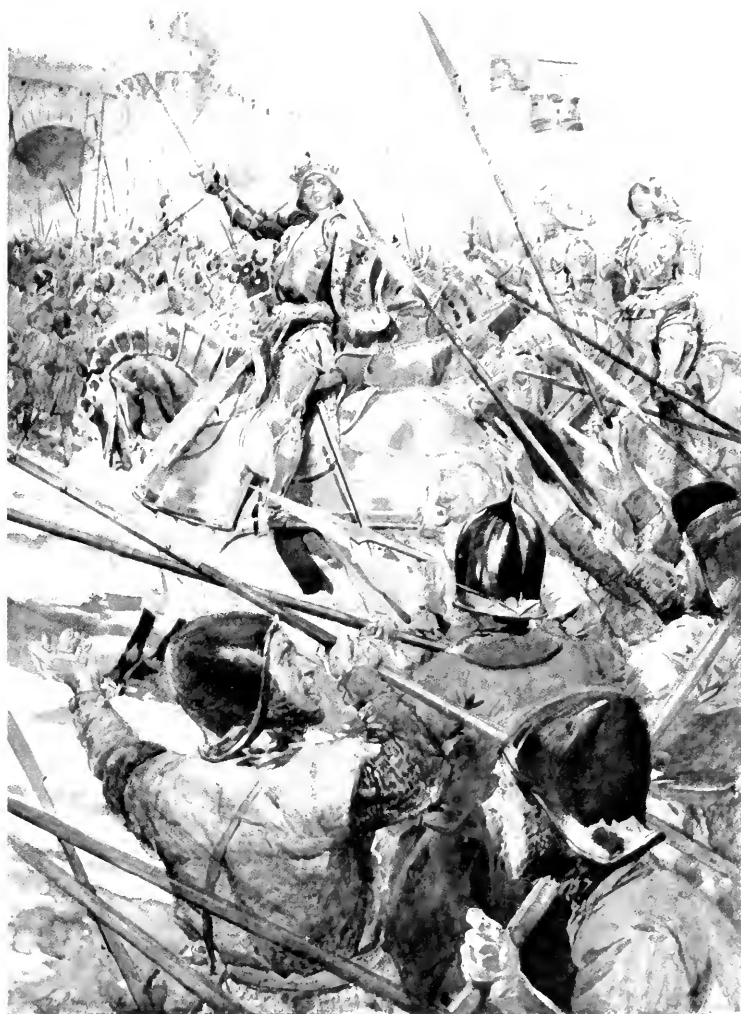
The King had summoned to his standard the Dukes, Princes, Barons, Lords and Knights of France, and men bearing the most honoured names in chivalry soon gathered around him, Orleans, Bourbon, Berri, Brabant, and Burgundy: Chatillon, Vaudemont, Fauconberg, Foix and Charolois, and thousands of lesser nobles whose deeds had made them famous. They sat around their tables and laughed with glee, and then sighed with impatience when they thought of vengeance and the hours of enforced delay which the night entailed. They must wait until the morning light came, but how wearisome that waiting was!

"I am sorry their numbers are so few, so sick and famished with their marches," sighed the Constable of France; "when they see our army their hearts will drop into the sink of fear and they will be able to do nothing save beg for ransom."

Then he boasted of the excellence of his weapons and armour, and as the dice rattled in the boxes, the Dauphin and the Duke of Orleans disputed on the relative merits of their powerful war-horses.

"Mine is a creature of fire and air," said the Dauphin, "when I bestride him I soar like a hawk. To-morrow I shall trot him over a pavement of English faces. O would that to-morrow were here!"

"Ah," replied the Constable with a weary sigh, "I would it were morning; for I would fain be about the ears of the English." Then to beguile the time they decided how they would dispose of their prisoners, and



“God for Harry, England, and St. George!”

King Henry the Fifth 191

Orleans said that by ten in the morning each knight would have a hundred Englishmen. But plague on it, would the darkness never go and daylight come to let them sweep away the starving English at once! If they could but lay their hands upon them, these island dogs would be like a foolish, whimpering cur in the fangs of a great Russian bear. Would the laggard hours of darkness never accomplish the weary march from midnight to sunrise?

The knights retired to their tents, but sleep was impossible because of their triumphant anticipations, and the first glimmer of daylight saw them clad in full armour, with their impatient, well-fed steeds champing the bit and stamping the ground with their iron-shod hoofs. As the earliest rays of the sun gilded the helmets of the French knights, word was brought that the English were forming into order of battle. They were massing within a field of fresh-sown corn, near the village of Maisoncelles. On their right was a thick wood, and across the main road to their left was a smaller wood. On account of the rain which had fallen all through the night, the newly-ploughed land was heavy, and the soldiers moved to their places with considerable difficulty. They had had a trying experience during the wet, dark hours, and the long marches and scanty diet had weakened their bodies though they had not destroyed their courage.

The King had encamped below some rising ground, with the forces of the Duke of Exeter and the Duke of York on each side of him. In front he had placed his trusty archers. Each man had a strong staff about six feet in length, which bore at each end a sharp iron point. Two active, well-armed forces were hidden in

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the woods to the right and left of the main body, with orders to attack vigorously when the French knights charged.

The French army was in three lines. On each side of the road to Agincourt and in front of the village were two strong divisions under the Constable of France. On the right and left, near the woods where the two English companies were lying in ambush, were two forces under the command of the Admiral of France and the Earl of Vendome. These formed the first line. Behind them, on the other side of Agincourt, were three divisions under the Dukes of Alençon and Bar, while the rear consisted of three divisions under the Earls of Fauconberg and Maine. Altogether the French leaders had brought some 80,000 fighting men within striking distance in and around Agincourt. To oppose them King Henry had some 5000 bowmen and 1000 lancers. A river swelled by many hours heavy rain barred his retreat, and Calais was some forty-five miles away.

When all his plans had been arranged King Henry spent some time among his soldiers. He wore a plain suit of armour, so that he could not be recognised. The first man who encountered him was the valiant braggart Pistol, who challenged him and demanded his name.

“Harry le Roy,” was the reply.

“Le Roy !” said Pistol, “a Cornish name ; art thou of Cornish crew ?”

“No, I am a Welshman.”

“Know'st thou Fluellen ? Tell him, I'll knock his leek about his pate upon Saint Davy's Day.”

With this boast Pistol passed on. Low voices were heard in the darkness, and presently Gower and Fluellen

drew near the King. Fluellen was telling Gower that he was foolish for speaking in a loud tone when the enemy was so near.

"Why, the enemy is loud," replied Gower, "you hear him all night."

"If the enemy is an ass and a fool and a prating coxcomb, is it meet, think you, that we should also, look you, be an ass and a fool and a prating coxcomb, in your own conscience now? If you would take the pains but to examine the wars of Pompey the Great, you shall find, I warrant you, that there is no tiddle-taddle nor pibble-pabble in Pompey's camp."

They disappeared in the darkness. Three soldiers conversing in earnest tones then drew near the King. One, whose names was Bates, was deploring the critical situation of the army, and said that he would give anything to be out of France, even if it were to be up to the neck in the river Thames. Another, named Williams, spoke of the heavy responsibility which lay upon the shoulders of the Kings whose word compelled men to fight in quarrels which did not belong to them. He thought that when all came to the test of trial before the throne of God a King would have to bear the weight of all the blood which had been spilled in battle. Henry joined in the discussion, but Williams returned a sharp answer and was evidently ready to quarrel. His anger rose when he was told that if the season had been a convenient one he would have been taught better manners. After a few hot words gloves were exchanged and each said that he would wear the glove in his helmet so that when they met again there would be no failure of recognition.

"If ever thou come to me," said Williams, "and
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say, after to-morrow, 'This is my glove,' by this hand, I will take thee a box on the ear."

"If ever I live to see it," the King replied, "I will challenge it, though I take thee in the King's company."

Muttering threats Williams and his comrades went to their posts, and the King was left alone to muse upon the heavy responsibilities which weigh upon a King.

"What infinite heart's-ease

Must kings neglect, that private men enjoy !

And what have kings, that privates have not too,

Save ceremony, save general ceremony ?

And what art thou, thou idol ceremony ?

What kind of god art thou, that suffer'st more

Of mortal griefs than do thy worshippers ?

What are thy rents ? What are thy comings in ?

O ceremony, show me but thy worth !

What is thy soul of adoration ?

Art thou aught else but place, degree and form,

Creating awe and fear in other men ?

Wherein thou art less happy being fear'd

Than they in fearing.

What drink'st thou oft, instead of homage sweet,

Put poison'd flattery ? O, be sick, great greatness,

And bid thy ceremony give thee cure !

Think'st thou the fiery fever will go out

With titles blown from adulation ?

Will it give place to flexure and low bending ?

Canst thou, when thou command'st the beggar's knee,

Command the health of it ? No, thou proud dream,

That play'st so subtilly with a king's repose ;

I am a king that find thee, and I know

'Tis not the balm, the sceptre and the ball,

*The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,
The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,
The farcéd title running 'fore the king,
The throne he sits on, nor the tide of pomp
That beats upon the high shore of this world,
No, not all these, thrice-gorgeous ceremony,
Not all these, laid in bed majestical,
Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave,
Who with a body fill'd and vacant mind
Gets him to rest, cramm'd with distressful bread ;
Never sees horrid night, the child of hell,
But, like a lackey, from the rise to set
Sweats in the eye of Phœbus and all night
Sleeps in Elysium ; next day after dawn,
Doth rise and help Hyperion to his horse,
And follows so the ever-running year,
With profitable labour, to his grave :
And, but for ceremony, such a wretch,
Winding up days with toil and nights with sleep,
Had the fore-hand and vantage of a king.
The slave, a member of the country's peace,
Enjoys it ; but in gross brain little wots
What watch the king keeps to maintain the peace,
Whose hours the peasant best advantages."*

By this time the rising sun was gilding the rain-drenched hedges, making every drop of water a sparkling diamond, and the fluttering of standards told the King that the forces of the Constable were mustering for the battle. A tall white-headed knight, Sir Thomas Erpingham, came lightly over the heavy ground. Bedford and Gloucester drew near and stood beside the King. With a bright smile Henry said :

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*“ Good morrow, brother Bedford. God Almighty !
There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out.
For our bad neighbour makes us early stirrers,
Which is both healthful and good husbandry :
Besides, they are our outward consciences,
And preachers to us all, admonishing
That we should dress us fairly for our end.”*

His hearers tried to smile at his cheery words, but their anxious, clouded faces betrayed too well the heavy forebodings which oppressed them. The King called for his horse and rode slowly through the ranks to where the archers were standing. Each man had his long iron-pointed staff in his hand. His good yew bow was slung over his shoulders, and every quiver was full of the grey goose-feathered shafts. The King once more repeated the orders which had been given to his bowmen. Always maintaining the wedge-like formation, each man was told to drive his staff firmly into the ground, leaving space for a man to slip through, and to advance far enough in front of the staves so as to give every archer plenty of room. When the horsemen charged, the fatal arrows were to be sent speeding in a thick cloud into them, and the attack was to be kept up until the knights were driven back. But if the horsemen came on again in force which threatened to overwhelm the bowmen, each man was to slip through the iron-pointed staves, and allow the knights to hurl themselves upon the rampart, while the re-formed archers galled them from a position of vantage. The King had no reason to doubt the courage and skill of his bowmen, and each man knew that the battle would have to be decided by the grey goose shaft.

Meanwhile Grandpré, one of the most daring of the French leaders, had been making a close observation of the English array as the men marched slowly into position. His boastful self-confidence found new assurance in the starved, wet, miserable appearance of the English, for in the dim mists of the raw October morning they looked like spectres, as they laboured over the heavy ploughland. Grandpré swung his horse round and dashed off to where he saw the standard of the Dauphin of France. He waved his hand in triumph as he rode through the mail-clad ranks of the French knights. The Constable and the Dauphin watched him as he reined up his powerful steed, and smiled to hear his words.

*“ Why do you stay so long, my lords of France ?
Yon island carrions, desperate of their bones,
Ill-favouredly become the morning field :
Their ragged curtains poorly are let loose,
And our air shakes them passing scornfully :
Big Mars seems bankrupt in their beggar'd host
And faintly through a rusty beaver peeps :
The horsemen sit like fixed candlesticks,
With torch-staves in their hand ; and their poor jades
Lob down their heads, dropping the hides and hips,
The gum down-roping from their pale-dead eyes,
And in their pale dull mouths the gimmel bit
Lies foul with chew'd grass, still and motionless ;
And their executors, the knavish crows,
Fly o'er them, all impatient for their hour.
Description cannot suit itself in words
To demonstrate the life of such a battle
In life so lifeless as it shows itself.”*

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As he spoke the sun rose above the tree-tops, and the mists began to disappear. Movement was seen in the far-flung French line, and the soldiers were ordered to converge upon the new-ploughed field where the English archers were gathered.

But there was no lifelessness among the bowmen now ; each man had driven his staff deep into the yielding soil, and a sharp barricade rose behind the men. With arrows stuck into the ground beside them, the archers strung their bows with the cords they had carefully kept from all damp, and a deep murmuring thrill sounded as the men drew them to their ears to test the strength of cord and yew.

Then from the close ranks behind was heard the voice of King Henry. He was answering the Earl of Westmoreland, who had wished that ten thousand of the men in England who did no work that day, might have been added to the ranks of their sorely pressed countrymen on the field of Agincourt.

“ *No, my fair cousin :*

If we are mark'd to die, we are enow

To do our country loss ; and if to live,

The fewer men, the greater share of honour.

God's will ! I pray thee, wish not one man more.

By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,

Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost ;

It yearns me not if men my garments wear ;

Such outward things dwell not in my desires :

But if it be a sin to covet honour,

I am the most offending soul alive.

No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England :

God's peace ! I would not lose so great an honour

*As one man more, methinks, would share from me
For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more !
Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host,
That he which hath no stomach to this fight,
Let him depart ; his passport shall be made
And crowns for convoy put into his purse :
We would not die in that man's company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.
This day is call'd the feast of Crispian :
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
Will stand a tip-toe when this day is named,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
He that shall live this day, and see old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
And say, ' To-morrow is Saint Crispian ' :
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,
And say, ' These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'
Old men forget ; yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day : then shall our names,
Familiar in his mouth as household words,
Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,
Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.
This story shall the good man teach his son ;
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembered ;
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers ;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother ; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition :
And gentlemen in England now a-bed*

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*Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day."*

The eloquent words of King Henry aroused the enthusiasm of his soldiers to full height and with a loud shout the bowmen ran some paces forward and poured a thick flight of arrows into the front lines of the French knights. Each archer had stripped to the waist and had bared one foot in order to get a firm foothold on the slippery, rain-sodden ground. They were expert shots, and their well-aimed arrows pierced the joints of armour and glided between the bars of closed helmets, bringing both man and horse to the ground.

The first French line disappeared, and a second rushed forward, to meet the same fate. Again there was the rush of the advance, and this time the archers were forced back by the impetuous valour of the knights, but they stepped between their defences, and the French found themselves in front of a wall of iron-tipped ash staves which defied every charge. In thick masses the arrows came hissing through the air from behind the barricade, and before long the knights and men-at-arms were scattered and compelled to fall back.

With hoarse cries of "St. George for England" and "Harry," the archers flung aside their bows and seized sword, axe, mace, or bill, and bursting like a torrent from behind the barricade, they dashed upon their enemies. It was a struggle of unexampled fierceness. Gloucester was wounded and would have been slain had not the King stood over his prostrate form and beat off the assailants. Alençon cut down and killed the Duke of York, and with a sweeping cut of his sword

struck the crown from Henry's helmet, and would have wounded him grievously had not Fluellen and his Welshmen dashed up and the valiant Frenchman was overthrown. The Earl of Suffolk was beaten from his horse and slain, and more than sixteen hundred gallant Englishmen fell around him.

Pistol, the braggart, captured a knight and forced him to give two hundred crowns as ransom, and with this money in his hand the valiant coward quitted the immediate scene of conflict. Nym and Bardolph had both been hanged for robbing churches, otherwise they would have been delighted to assist in the spoiling of the defeated Frenchmen.

Victory sat upon the helmets of the English that day, and a terrible destruction overwhelmed their enemies. The Constable and Admiral of France, Alençon, Brabant, Bar, and more than 8000 knights and squires and 2000 men-at-arms lay dead. Bourbon and Orleans were both captured, and the Dauphin fled. The stubborn resistance before the barricade added to a sudden attack on right and left by the forces which had been concealed in the woods, completed the overthrow, and before the afternoon sun had set the great battle of Agincourt was at an end. The slaughter of a number of French prisoners was the only event which stained the glory of the day, and this arose from a misapprehension. The King was leaning upon his sword, surveying the field of conflict, when Gower and Fluellen drew near.

"O, 'tis a gallant King," shouted Gower, as he saw the flushed face of Henry.

"Ay," said Fluellen, "he was porn at Monmouth, Captain Gower. What call you the town's name where Alexander the Pig was born?"

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“ I think Alexander the Great was born in Macedon.”

“ I think it is in Macedon where Alexander is born,” replied Fluellen. “ I tell you, captain, if you look in the maps of the 'orld, I warrant you sall find, in the comparisons between Macedon and Monmouth, that the situations, look you, is both alike. There is a river in Macedon ; and there is also moreover a river at Monmouth : it is called Wye at Monmouth ; but it is out of my prains what is the name of the other river ; but 'tis all one, 'tis alike as my fingers is to my fingers, and there is salmons in both. If you mark Alexander's life well, Harry of Monmouth's life is come after it indifferent well ; for there is figures in all things. I'll tell you there is good men born at Monmouth. All the water in Wye cannot wash your Majesty's Welsh plood out of your pody, I can tell you that : God pless it and preserve it, as long as it pleases his grace, and his majesty too ! ”

“ Thanks, good my countryman,” returned the King, with a gracious smile, raising his dinted helmet from his thick brown hair, and noting where the heavy sword of Alençon had broken the diadem which he wore.

“ I am your Majesty's countryman,” replied the delighted Fluellen, “ I care not who know it ; I will confess it to all the 'orld : I need not to be ashamed of your Majesty, praised be God, so long as your Majesty is an honest man.” Just then the King saw Williams, the man-at-arms, some distance away. He had the glove in his helmet which he had received from the unknown soldier of the night before. Henry took the glove which Williams had given him as a gage, and asked Fluellen to wear it in his helmet. “ It is the glove of

Alençon," he said. "Wear it in thy cap: if any man challenge this, he is a friend to Alençon, and an enemy to our person; if thou encounter any such, apprehend him, an' thou dost me love."

The King knew what would happen if the two hot-tempered soldiers met. Fluellen placed the glove in his cap and went off to his duties. As soon as Williams saw him he lifted his hand and struck him upon the head. Fluellen was not slow to return the blow, and as he deemed that Williams was a traitor, it soon became evident that a deadly broil had arisen. The King came forward, however, and soon pacified the adversaries, although Fluellen felt sore that he had been deprived of what promised to be a very pretty quarrel. In this mood he came across Pistol, who had offended him mightily by jeering at the emblem of Wales and offering him bread and salt to eat with his leek. Pistol had chosen his opportunity carefully and Fluellen had not leisure then to deal with him as he deserved, but he swore that he would be revenged upon that "rascally, scauld, beggarly, praggling knave." When the braggart approached, Fluellen darted out and greeted him in homely fashion, "God pless you, Aunchient Pistol! you scurvy, lousy knave, God pless you. I beseech you heartily, scurvy, lousy knave, at my desires, and my requests, and my petitions, to eat, look you, this leek; because, look you, you do not love it, nor your affections and your appetites and your disgestions doo's not agree with it, I would desire you to eat it."

He pulled out a big leek and forced it into the hand of the blusterer. Pistol swore with many rolling words that he would murder him, and pretended to draw a dagger, but Fluellen produced a stout cudgel and

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proceeded to persuade him to eat the leek, by hitting him over the head.

"I pray you, fall to," he said, "if you can mock a leek, you can eat a leek. Bite, I pray you, it is good for you." When Pistol hesitated, the stick came down again upon his pate, and Fluellen kindly inquired how he liked cudgel-sauce with his leek. He took a bite and made a face, but he was compelled to swallow the morsel, and then Fluellen told him that he must also eat the skin. With the Welshman standing beside him Pistol was compelled to finish the leek, and his disgrace was completed by the gift of a groat and a curt dismissal. He crept away, rubbing his sore head and vowing a terrible vengeance against all Welshmen, and at the same time resolving to give up what he considered to be the foolish and dangerous business of fighting for his country. "To England will I steal," he muttered, as he slunk off, "and there I'll steal : and patches will I get unto these cudgell'd scars and swear I got them in the Gallia wars."

King Henry returned to England in the middle of November and received a rapturous welcome when he landed at Dover, and all London acclaimed him as he rode to St. Paul's Cathedral to give thanks to God for his victory at Agincourt, and afterwards when he sailed up the river in his royal barge to the Abbey church of Saint Peter at Westminster. Early the next year he crossed over to France again and began the campaign which ended in the Treaty of Troyes, May 1240, which acknowledged Henry of England to be the rightful heir of France, and confirmed him in the possession of Gascony, Guienne, Poitou, Touraine, Normandy and Picardy, territories which had been lost for many years

to England, but were now recovered by the stalwart soldier who dignified the English throne. Rouen, Chartres, and Paris also came under his sway, and thus Henry established his position as the greatest of England's warrior kings. But he did more to make it secure, by his marriage with the Princess Katharine, daughter of Charles and Isabel of France.

Their courtship was one of the quaintest of episodes. The Princess, although she tried to learn some English from her ladies, did not know the language, and Henry appears to have had some difficulty in expressing his mind in the French tongue. Their conversation, therefore, was a curious mixture, but nothing could daunt the straightforward pursuit of King Henry. "I' faith, Kate," said he, "my wooing is fit for thy understanding: I am glad thou canst speak no better English; for, if thou couldst, thou wouldst find me such a plain king that thou wouldst think I had sold my farm to buy my crown. I know no ways to mince it in love, but directly to say 'I love you': I speak to thee plain soldier: if thou canst love me for this, take me; if not, to say to thee that I shall die, is true; but for thy love, by the Lord, no; yet I love thee too. And while thou livest, dear Kate, take a fellow of plain and uncoined constancy; for he perforce must do thee right, because he hath not the gift to woo in other places: for these fellows of infinite tongue, that can rhyme themselves into ladies' favours, they do always reason themselves out again. What! a speaker is but a prater; a rhyme is but a ballad. A good leg will fall; a straight back will stoop; a black beard will turn white; a curled pate will grow bald; a fair face will wither; a full eye will wax hollow: but a good heart, Kate, is the sun and the

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moon ; or, rather, the sun, and not the moon ; for it shines bright and never changes, but keeps his course truly. If thou would have such a one, take me ; and take me, take a soldier ; take a soldier, take a king. And what sayest thou then to my love ? Speak, my fair, and fairly, I pray thee."

There could only be one answer to such a plain, honest wooing, and the Princess accepted her soldier lover and thus united, for a time, the rival countries of England and France. But in August 1422, King Henry, then in the thirty-fifth year of his age, fell into the sickness which carried him to the grave, and Katharine, with her infant son, Henry of Windsor, was left to bewail the brave strong soldier King who had done so much to build up the walls of England. His life had been a short one, but one which had been filled from the day of his accession with brilliant statesmanship and heroic deeds.

*" Small time, but in that small most greatly lived
This star of England : Fortune made his sword ;
By which the world's best garden he achieved,
And of it left his son imperial lord."*

And yet the fruit of his great deeds was a bitter harvest, and it was truly said :

*" Glory is like a circle on the water
Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself,
Till, by broad spreading, it disperse to nought.
With Henry's death the English circle ends,
Dispersed are the glories it included."*

For from the weak hands of Henry VI. the glorious possession slipped away, and England herself, in the terrible Wars of the Roses, was soon deluged with the blood of her knightly sons.



"If thou would have such a one, take me."

06

King Henry the Sixth

IN the early autumn of the year 1422, the ancient noble abbey church of Saint Peter at Westminster was the scene of a great funeral ceremony. The body of King Henry V. was about to be laid to rest in the quiet sleeping place of great Englishmen. His death had come upon the kingdom with the force of a terrible catastrophe. He had only reigned nine years and a half, but, in that time, his wise statesmanship and dauntless courage had enabled him to more than outrival great Edward III. and the chivalrous Black Prince by adding the territories of France to those of England. By the Treaty of Troyes he had compelled the weak King of France to disinherit his own son, Charles the Dauphin, and to adopt Henry as his heir.

In the height of his success he was establishing himself and the affairs of England upon a sure basis when a severe illness laid hold of him and caused his death at Vincennes, near Paris, in August, 1422. Before he died he gave directions for the future ruling of the two kingdoms, and the guardianship of his infant son. To his brother, the Duke of Bedford, he committed the Regency of France, and to his other brother, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, the Protectorship of England. To his two uncles, Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, and Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter, he entrusted the guardianship of his child. Richard Neville, Earl of

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Warwick, a soldier who for many years served with great honour in the high and responsible position of Captain of Calais, was later to become the knightly tutor of the young King. Warwick was a man of great wisdom and military prowess, truly representative of the chivalry of the day, and one well-qualified by great experience to make a good soldier of the prince committed to his charge.

In order to secure the friendship of the powerful Duke of Burgundy, Bedford married his sister, and later promoted another marriage whereby Brittany was won over to the English side. Bedford knew well that on the death of the frail King of France, the young Dauphin, a man of vigorous mind and determined purpose, would refuse to submit to the treaty which set him aside from the succession to the throne, and that he would urge the French people, by all the eloquence at his command, to rise against the English usurpers and win back the territories wrested from them by Henry V. Guienne, Champagne, Rheims, Orleans, Paris, Gisors, Poitiers, Rouen, and the fairest portions of France were under the power of England, but the strong hand which had snatched them was now mouldering in the coffin and the sharp sword lay rusting in its sheath. Why, then, should not France bestir herself and once more be free ?

When a great man holds his possessions in the firm grasp of a statesman and soldier, faction slumbers or works out its purposes in darkness and stealth. Rivalries are concealed, because men dread the vigilance of a vigorous ruler who has power and is quick to maintain order. Lesser men can only plot in secret, or hint at what they desire should come to pass. Changes occur

rapidly when the King is an infant and nobles have been called upon to rule until he comes of age. Hidden factions now have courage to assert themselves, jealousies spring forward into the light, ambitions try to vault into high places, and many wills strive for pre-eminence in the place where one in former days ruled alone.

As a new generation presses forward to the study of problems which present themselves, new factors demand an answer, and adjustments have to be made. Kingdoms and peoples cannot stand still, and from the ranks of the greatest number, that is, the common people, new forces are constantly emerging which require a careful study and handling on the part of kings and nobles. It was so in England at the time of the death of King Henry V., it is so in the England of to-day.

Even while the coffin of the dead king was resting where the light, streaming through the beautiful stained glass windows, fell upon the helpless dust of one who once held the bravest, strongest, and most ambitious of his nobles in awe, those same nobles were confronting each other with frowning brow and flashing eye, and strong, tumultuous passions were rising which would, before many years had passed away, drench the green fields of England with blood, hurl great families into oblivion, and make way for the coming of a host of merchants and workers.

Bedford, the eldest surviving brother of the late King, now Regent of France, was of shrewd mind and calm temperament, energetic when roused, but, in the main, inclined to achieve his ends by tactful dealing rather than by force. His brother, Humphrey of Gloucester,

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was outspoken and impulsive, lacking somewhat in foresight and deliberation, and thereby prone to spoil matters by hasty decisions ; passionate and selfish, and brave to recklessness ; careless of the Church, but studious of religion, never afraid to declare his convictions, open in his animosities and ever ready to give offence or accept a challenge. It was on account of his hasty marriage with Jacqueline, Duchess of Holland, that the Duke of Burgundy afterwards broke away from his alliance with England ; and because of his outspoken enmity with the Beauforts that Gloucester's life was ended, probably by poison. He hated the Bishop of Winchester, and was at variance with his uncles Exeter and Somerset.

The Duke of Bedford had left the English forces in France under the command of Lord Talbot and his son, with Lords Scales, Hungerford, and Salisbury, and they were watching every move made by the Dauphin. Sir John Fastolfe, a distinguished soldier who had won great renown at Agincourt, was Governor of Normandy, and, later, of Anjou and Maine. The Earl of Warwick kept watch and ward over the fortress of Calais, the gateway of France.

But there was another nobleman of high rank, who was destined to play a great part in the stormy events which were, in a few years, to break over England. His name was Richard Plantagenet, son of Richard, Earl of Cambridge, second son of Edmund, Duke of York, who was the third son and fifth child of Edward III. and Philippa of Hainault. By the marriage of Richard of Cambridge with Ann Holland, heiress of the Mortimers, Richard Plantagenet united in himself the claims of the second and fourth sons of Edward, while Henry VI.

represented the noble line of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. If King Henry died unmarried, Humphrey of Gloucester stood next in the succession, after him came the Duke of Somerset, and later Margaret Beaufort. Thus Henry VI., Gloucester, and the Beauforts stood for the House of Lancaster, and Richard Plantagenet for the House of York.

Two strong Lancastrian Kings had reigned since the day when Henry Bolingbroke had snatched the sceptre of England, with boisterous hand, from the nerveless grip of Richard II., but the adherents of the elder branch had not forgotten their claims, and in the troublous season of the minority of one whose frail infancy and youth foretold a weak maturity, a man like Plantagenet was not likely to allow so favourable an opportunity to go by unheeded, and his marriage with Cicely Neville, a daughter of the knightly and powerful House of Warwick, assured him of stalwart supporters, if at any time the question of the succession to the Crown came to be settled upon the field of battle. With these indications of the main actors of the drama before us, we can move with greater ease along the pathways of the play of Henry VI.

We return to that solemn funeral procession which, on an autumn day in the year 1422, wended its way through the sorrowing crowds in the streets of London, to the noble sanctuary of Westminster Abbey. Within the ancient walls the Duke of Bedford stood bare-headed beside the coffin. Gloucester with gloomy brow watched his hated rival the Bishop of Winchester. Exeter and Warwick stood near. In a great concourse, which completely filled the Abbey, the nobles and commoners stood massed within the great nave, and the branching

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aisles and many galleries, while there pealed forth the solemn strains of a funeral march. Lifting up his voice that many might hear, the Bishop of Winchester spoke thus of the dead King :

*“ He was a king bless'd of the King of Kings.
Unto the French the dreadful Judgement-day
So dreadful will not be as was his sight.
The battles of the Lord of hosts he fought :
The church's prayers made him so prosperous.”*

As he paused to look upon the crowd a voice, whose accents were full of scorn, broke the silence, and Gloucester, shrugging his shoulders, thus derided the prelate :

*“ The church ! where is it ? Had not churchmen pray'd,
His thread of life had not so soon decay'd :
None do you like but an effeminate prince,
Whom, like a schoolboy, you may over-awe.”*

The proud face of Winchester flushed with rage, but unheeding him, Gloucester went on,

*“ Name not religion, for thou lovest the flesh,
And ne'er throughout the year to church thou go'st
Except it be to pray against thy foes.”*

As Bedford lifted up his voice to bid the opposing factions preserve peace in the sacred edifice, and before the dust of England's hero-King, a noise was heard among the crowds, and two men, their garments dusty and stained with travel, were seen pressing forward. They were messengers from France, and bearers of evil tidings. They announced that the captured cities and provinces had been overrun by the soldiers of the

Dauphin, with whom were the Dukes of Orleans, Anjou and Alençon ; Charles himself had been crowned King of France in Rheims, and at the siege of Orleans the valiant knight Talbot, driven back by more than twenty thousand foes, had been wounded and taken prisoner. With him were Lord Scales and Lord Hungerford. The victorious Frenchmen had then attacked Lord Salisbury, and when the messengers had been sent off the English army, spent with toil, and faint for want of food, was watching outside the walls, hard put to it to keep the flag of England waving from the turrets of the fort they had captured. When the messengers had given their heart-moving tidings, one thought alone dwelt in the minds of Bedford and Duke Humphrey. It was to raise a strong army and hasten with all speed to the aid of Salisbury.

Meanwhile within the besieged city Charles the Dauphin, Reignier and Alençon were holding an important council of war. Some of his friends were strongly in favour of constant attacks, while others counselled delay. As each party urged their reasons for the course they advised, the Duke of Orleans entered and announced that Joan La Pucelle or Joan d'Arc, as she came to be called, a holy maid, a prophetess who claimed to be inspired of God, begged an immediate audience of the Dauphin.

At this the Dauphin proposed to test the prophetic insight of the maiden by means of a little stratagem. He directed Reignier to assume his position, and, with proud and stern looks, to question the prophetess. But when Reignier said : " Fair maid, is't thou wilt do these wondrous feats ? " her answer tore aside the veil of his disguise in an instant.

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*"Reignier, is't thou that thinkest to beguile me?
Where is the Dauphin? Come, come from behind;
I know thee well, though never seen before.
Be not amazed, there's nothing hid from me:
In private will I talk with thee apart.
Stand back, you lords, and give us leave awhile."*

Having failed in this plan the Dauphin suggested another, and challenged the prophetess to a combat with swords.

"I am prepared:" she said, *"here is my keen-edged sword,
Deck'd with five flower-de-luces on each side;
The which at Touraine, in Saint Katherine's churchyard,
Out of a great deal of old iron I chose forth."*

The Dauphin was a skilled and practised swordsman, but a few passes saw him disarmed and overcome.

"Stay, stay thy hands!" he cried, *"thou art an Amazon,
And fightest with the sword of Deborah."*

The maiden who thus overcame him was about eighteen years of age, well-limbed and strong; her face, once tanned with sun and wind, was now fair and beautiful, for, as she said, the heavenly vision which she had seen had changed her. She was a girl of humble birth, a herdsman of Domremy, a village which lies, in the shelter of the Vosges Mountains, on the eastern frontiers of France. Her bright hair clustered around a broad forehead and shapely neck, faith and courage looked out from her steadfast eyes. She was not in any way abashed by the high rank of the glittering knights who stood around the Dauphin; on the contrary, her

lofty demeanour made them realise that she carried herself with more dignity than a queen and was full of the mysterious power which is born of spiritual fervour and strong faith in God.

The Dauphin having tried by subterfuge and combat to overcome the maiden, and failed both in word and by the sword, was impressed with her earnestness and truthfulness. He bade her speak out. She counselled a fierce attack upon the positions gained by the English, and, pointing to the strong tower called the Tournelles which stood at the end of the bridge before the city, promised that by nightfall Salisbury and his men should be put to flight and Orleans be relieved. Her words were full of courage.

*“ Fight till the last gasp ; I will be your guard.
Assign’d am I to be the English scourge.
This night the siege assuredly I’ll raise :
Expect Saint Martin’s summer, halcyon days,
Since I have entered into these wars.
Glory is like a circle in the water,
Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself
Till by broad spreading it disperse to nought.
With Henry’s death the English circle ends ;
Dispersed are the glories it included.
Now am I like that proud insulting ship
Which Cæsar and his fortune bare at once.”*

As the Dauphin heard her words, a new courage sprang up in his heart. Sinking upon one knee before Joan he said :

*“ Was Mahomet inspired with a dove ?
Thou with an eagle art inspired then.*

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*Helen, the mother of great Constantine,
Nor yet Saint Philip's daughters, were like thee.
Bright star of Venus, fall'n down on the earth,
How may I reverently worship thee enough ? "*

Meanwhile, in the fort of Tournelles, the English leaders were rejoicing because the stalwart Talbot had been released by his captors and had once again joined Salisbury. He said that he had been exposed as a public spectacle in the market place, guarded by soldiers whose orders were to shoot him if he attempted to escape. Then, by good fortune he was exchanged for a French nobleman captured by Bedford, and was set free.

As Salisbury and Talbot greeted each other, a round-shot fired from the city burst through the casement. Salisbury, struck in the face, shrieked aloud and fell. There was a sudden outcry from the camp. Crowds of French soldiers rushed across the bridge, and the Dauphin, followed by La Pucelle, swept down upon the English. Talbot sprang to meet them, but was hurled aside. The English fell back, rallied, were driven apart again, and finally, finding it impossible to resist the furious onslaught of the French, broke and fled. They did not regain confidence until they saw the waving pennons of Bedford's army, and sheltered themselves behind the lances and swords of his array.

With feasting and great rejoicing the French returned to Orleans, but that night a careless watch was kept.

Bedford, Burgundy and Talbot advanced quickly and stealthily, and before the drowsy French could snatch their clothing and weapons the English soldiers were among them. and Orleans was taken and sacked. The



'How may I reverently worship thee enough?'

body of the slain Salisbury was buried in the great cathedral, and Talbot commanded a stately monument to be erected to his memory. Then the victorious army marched to Rouen, towards which city the Dauphin and La Pucelle had retreated.

Rouen was a fortress of great strength. By a clever stratagem Joan with four soldiers beguiled the sentinels and entered the city at nightfall. Thrusting a blazing torch through a casement she gave the signal to the leaders of the French army, and with a wild rush the gates were burst open by the forces under the Dauphin, and Rouen was won. But not for long. Brave Talbot, with Burgundy his ally, vowed to retake and hold the city consecrated as the place where the heart of the Great Cœur-de-Lion lay buried, and even the sorely-stricken Bedford, dying with old age and fatigue, swore to make a last effort by his side. They were successful, and soon the plain outside Rouen was covered with retreating Frenchmen.

It was many hours before Joan could stay the precipitate flight, and the French had hardly recovered themselves when the martial roll of drums and blare of trumpets revealed the fact that Talbot, leaving a garrison in Rouen, was hastening to join the young King Henry and his nobles in Paris.

The quick mind of Joan of Arc conceived a plan to weaken Talbot. It was to detach Burgundy from him by appealing to his love for France. She knew that he was finding the alliance with the English irksome, and hoped that by her words she might win him to her side. He had lagged behind Talbot, and Joan seized the opportunity thus afforded of making a personal appeal. Advancing quickly, she cried :

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“ *Brave Burgundy, undoubted hope of France !
Stay, let thy humble handmaid speak to thee.*”

The vanguard halted and the Duke came nearer. “Speak on ; but be not over-tedious,” he said, with an impatient gesture. He little knew how skilfully this warrior-maiden could frame her eloquent pleadings. In a few minutes he was won over, and Talbot had lost his ally. With heaving breast and flashing eyes, Joan said :

“ *Look on thy country, look on fertile France,
And see the cities and the towns defaced
By roasting ruin of the cruel foe.
As looks the mother on her lowly babe
When death doth close his tender dying eyes,
See, see the pining malady of France ;
Behold the wounds, the most unnatural wounds,
Which thou thyself hast given her woful breast.
O, turn thy edged sword another way ;
Strike those that hurt, and hurt not those that help.
One drop of blood drawn from thy country's bosom
Should grieve thee more than streams of foreign gore :
Return thee therefore with a flood of tears,
And wash away thy country's stained spots.*”

Her words bit deep, and Burgundy was unable to withstand the feelings raised within him. He could not forget what he owed to the soil which was his motherland. That night a messenger left his camp to bear a message to King Henry, who was in Paris for the coronation ceremony. It was a blunt renunciation of his alliance with England, and ran as follows : “ To the King. I have, upon especial cause, moved with com-

passion of my country's wreck, together with the pitiful complaints of such as your oppression feeds upon, forsaken your pernicious faction, and join'd with Charles, the rightful King of France." Henry read it with misgiving and a sudden chill of fear. He seemed to see in the message a portent of the loss of all the French possessions. But there were brave men about him, patriotic Englishmen whose swords had beaten out their fortunes on the rough anvil of war, and they laughed Burgundy and his insolent message to scorn. Before long, stout John Talbot was hammering at the gates of Bordeaux, summoning the garrison to surrender. His words were like a trumpet-blast.

*"Open your city-gates ;
Be humble to us ; call my sovereign yours,
And do him homage as obedient subjects."*

Many miles away, upon the plains of Gascony, the Duke of York was marching with his army in the hope that he might overtake the Dauphin. Somerset had lingered behind in order to enlist a number of cavalry and send the regiments to support York. But the Dauphin and Burgundy had, with great cleverness, followed hard upon Talbot, and the brave old warrior now had the strong garrison and the great walls of Bordeaux before him, and a powerful army close upon his rear. The lion was in the trap, but as yet the steel teeth had not closed upon him. The sound of drums and the glitter of thousands of spear-heads showed him his danger, whereupon he despatched Sir William Lucy to bear the tidings to York. As the knight galloped into the camp, he cried, "Spur to the rescue of the noble Talbot, who now is girdled with a waist of iron, and

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hemmed about with grim destruction. To Bordeaux, warlike duke ! to Bordeaux, York ! Else, farewell Talbot, France, and England's honour."

But York was helpless without Somerset's long-expected levies. When Lucy heard the fatal tidings he swung his charger round, dashed in the spurs, and hurried off to meet Somerset. He had before this encountered young Talbot, and a word had sent the young knight, who had not seen his father for seven long years, hot-foot with all his horsemen to the rescue. Breathless with hard riding, Lucy at length saw Somerset coming leisurely at the head of a strong body of cavalry. In spite of the high rank of the Duke, the plain-spoken Lucy did not conceal the anger which was raging within him, as Somerset called out to enquire whither the Knight was riding.

*" Whither, my lord ? from bought and sold Lord Talbot ;
Who, ring'd about with bold adversity,
Cries out for noble York and Somerset,
To beat assailing death from his weak legions :
And whiles the honourable captain there
Drops bloody sweat from his war-wearied limbs,
And, in advantage lingering, looks for rescue,
You, his false hopes, the trust of England's honour,
Keep off aloof with worthless emulation.
Let not your private discord keep away
The levied succours that should lend him aid,
While he, renowned noble gentleman,
Yields up his life unto a world of odds :
Orleans the Bastard, Charles, Burgundy,
Alençon, Reignier, compass him about
And Talbot perisheth by your default."*

Somerset went pale to the lips as these bold words rang in his ears.

“ *York set him on ;* ” he said, “ *York should have sent him aid.* ”

When the streaming banners from Bordeaux and the answering trumpets of the Dauphin gave the signal for attack, old John Talbot and his son stood side by side. They exchanged a few words of greeting, and then the tide of battle swept them apart. Young Talbot was overwhelmed and slain. His father, borne down by fearful odds, was wounded in many places, and at length Death found him, and the mightiest foe of France lay helpless in the mud and carnage of the field.

After these events the scene of strife passed to Angiers, and on the plains outside the city York encountered the French, and Joan of Arc was taken prisoner. She was tried as a sorceress and condemned to death by the Bishop of Beauvais, and Warwick and York saw her led away to be burned at the stake. With her death events in France took a new turn ; but in spite of treaties and alliances, all that had been won by the valour of Henry V. slipped away, and France was almost entirely lost to England.

The explanation must be sought for in English jealousy rather than in French courage. The death of Talbot might have been avoided if Somerset and York had not been jealous of each other, and this calamity was only another indication of the bitter feeling which had grown up between the representatives of rival factions.

Gloucester with his blue-coated retainers, Winchester with his tawny coats, and Plantagenet with his supporters

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of the White Rose, were the great figures around which the strong currents swirled ; indeed, between the Protector and the Cardinal there raged a bitter feud which could only be satisfied with death. Plantagenet, however, was the strongest figure of them all, and one who knew how to hide his ambitions until Time had opened the way for him. Before the old Earl Mortimer died in the Tower, he had called Richard of York to him in order to remind him that the elder succession from Edward III. was now passing into his hands. Through his mother the lines of Clarence and York were united in the person of Richard Plantagenet. John of Gaunt, the founder of the Lancastrians, was the fourth child of Edward III., therefore York represented the elder branch and Henry VI., the younger. But since the execution of his father, the Earl of Cambridge, and the forfeiture of his lands for treason, York had not been able to take his rightful position ; it was necessary, therefore, to claim from Henry and the Parliament, at some moment which was favourable, the restoration of all which had been lost and could be given again, and from this point of vantage press forward in his claim to the throne of England.

One day when the gardens of the Temple, in London, were bright with all the beauty of the summer-time, a party of gentlemen of high rank emerged from the Hall where the ablest lawyers in the kingdom were accustomed to confer. The Earls of Somerset, Suffolk and Warwick attended by two lawyers strode into the sunlight and turned to the Temple gardens. Richard Plantagenet, with determined, frowning face, followed. He overtook them as they sauntered along a pathway where the rose-bushes bloomed, and fragrant flowers were on every

side, and demanded an answer to the case which had been submitted to them. They replied with evasive, taunting words.

"Judge you, my lord of Warwick, then, between us," said Somerset, turning to the burly knightly figure of the man of camps and battles. The reply was typical of the soldier, and at the same time of one who was not going to allow himself to be beguiled by Somerset.

*"Between two hawks, which flies the higher pitch ;
Between two dogs, which hath the deeper mouth ;
Between two blades, which bears the better temper :
Between two horses, which doth bear him best ;
Between two girls, which hath the merriest eye ;
I have perhaps some shallow spirit of judgement :
But in these nice sharp quillets of the law,
Good faith, I am no wiser than a daw."*

For a few minutes Plantagenet stood looking in anger upon his antagonists. Glancing from them to the garden his eyes fell upon the white petals of a lovely rose. He plucked it from its bush and raised it aloft that all might see :

*"Since you are tongue-tied and so loath to speak,
In dumb significants proclaim your thoughts :
Let him that is a true-born gentleman,
And stands upon the honour of his birth,
If he suppose that I have pleaded truth,
From off this brier pluck a white rose with me."*

Instantly Somerset snatched a red rose and held it out, saying :

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*"Let him that is no coward nor no flatterer,
But dare maintain the party of the truth,
Pluck a red rose from off this thorn with me."*

As Suffolk was stretching out a hand, Vernon interposed to suggest that the verdict should lie in favour of the party which had the greater number of roses. His suggestion was accepted. Somerset and Suffolk plucked red roses. Plantagenet, Warwick, Vernon and the other lawyer held aloft the white. Plantagenet had triumphed. As the bearers of the red rose walked proudly towards the river, which ran swiftly past the Temple stairs, Warwick raised his white rose and fastened it in his helmet.

*"Here I prophesy : " he said, " this brawl to-day,
Grown to this faction in the Temple-garden,
Shall send between the red rose and the white
A thousand souls to death and deadly night."*

When Parliament met, the Duke of Gloucester urged the King to restore to Richard Plantagenet all that had been taken from his father. The Beauforts were furious, but Warwick supported Gloucester, and Henry, on his promise of allegiance, commanded Plantagenet to kneel.

*"Stoop then and set your knee against my foot ;
And, in requerdon of that duty done,
I gird thee with the valiant sword of York :
Rise, Richard, like a true Plantagenet,
And rise created princely Duke of York."*

There was a shout of acclaim from the assembled peers, and the brilliant array of knights passed out to

embark for France, where the coronation of Henry as King of France was to be solemnised. The aged statesman Exeter was left alone.

“*Ay,*” said he, “*we may march in England or in France,
Not seeing what is likely to ensue.
This late dissension grown betwixt the peers
Burns under feigned ashes of forged love,
And will at last break out into a flame :
As fester’d members rot but by degree,
Till bones and flesh and sinews fall away,
So will this base and envious discord breed.
And now I fear that fatal prophecy
Which in the time of Henry named the fifth
Was in the mouth of every sucking babe ;
That Henry born at Monmouth should win all
And Henry born at Windsor lose all :
Which is so plain, that Exeter doth wish
His days may finish ere that hapless time.*”

A few weeks later King Henry ranged himself definitely on the side of the red rose. It was in Paris, and a scene of strife between Vernon and a man named Basset was the occasion. Then Somerset and York took sides, and Henry, while striving to end the faction, added to it by plucking a red rose and placing it in his cap. “I like it not,” said York to Warwick, “in that the King wears the badge of Somerset.”

But the final blow was given when it was announced that a marriage had been arranged between King Henry and Margaret, daughter of Reignier, Duke of Anjou and titular King of Naples and Jerusalem. Suffolk was commissioned to arrange the matter, and his management of the affair, inasmuch as it involved the giving up

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to Reignier of Anjou and Maine, aroused the deepest resentment in the minds of Gloucester, Salisbury, Warwick, and York.

Margaret was a proud and headstrong woman, whose ambitions soared to the highest position. Her pride raised enemies against her, and the Duchess of Gloucester soon felt the power of her enmity. Being arraigned for witchcraft, she was condemned to march through the streets of London, barefooted, clad in a white sheet and carrying a burning taper. This penance done, she was flung into prison. The Queen then turned her malice against the Duke, and he was accused of treason, arrested, and brought before the King, where Winchester and Suffolk gave testimony against him. Henry tried hard to use his strength against theirs, but his vacillating words were easily brushed aside, and Gloucester was removed to prison.

But this was sorely against the King's desire, for Henry knew and said that Gloucester was innocent.

*“ These great lords and Margaret our queen
Do seek subversion of thy harmless life.
Thou never didst them wrong nor no man wrong ;
And as the butcher takes away the calf,
And binds the wretch, and beats it when it strays,
Bearing it to the bloody slaughter-house,
Even so remorseless have they borne him hence ;
And as the dam runs lowing up and down,
Looking the way her harmless young one went,
And can do nought but wail her darling's loss,
Even so myself bewails good Gloucester's case
With sad unhelpful tears, and with dimm'd eyes
Look after him and cannot do him good,*

*So mighty are his vowed enemies.
His fortunes I will weep, and 'twixt each groan
Say 'Who's a traitor? Gloucester he is none.' "*

Yet despite the King's belief in his innocence Margaret and Suffolk plotted Gloucester's death, and in a room in Bury St. Edmunds the duke was done to death by poison forcibly administered by some murderers commissioned by Suffolk, and the news was circulated that good Duke Humphrey had died in his sleep. When the King heard it he swooned, and on his recovery turned away from Suffolk, for he knew instinctively that the Duke had had some hand in his kinsman's death. His wife's protestations fell also upon unheeding ears, and when he saw the body his suspicions became certainty.

Warwick did not hesitate to speak what was in his own mind. Looking sternly upon the Queen and Suffolk, he said :

*" As surely as my soul intends to live
With that dread King, that took our state upon Him
To free us from his Father's wrathful curse,
I do believe that violent hands were laid
Upon the life of this thrice-famed duke."*

Then fixing his gaze upon Suffolk, and calling him a pernicious bloodsucker of sleeping men, he cried :

*" But that the guilt of murder bucklers thee,
And I should rob the deathsman of his fee,
Quitting thee thereby of ten thousand shames,
I would give thee thy hire and send thy soul to hell."*

His stern glance for a moment rested upon the King, but Henry's eyes did not blench. As Warwick left the chamber the King said :

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*“ What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted !
Thrice is he arm'd that hath his quarrel just,
And he but naked, though lock'd up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.”*

He was aroused from meditation by an uproar outside the palace. The commons were clamouring for the death or banishment of Suffolk. They could not be appeased until the suspected murderer was brought to justice. Suffolk was bidden to leave the realm forthwith. He left the Court and took ship for France, but he was intercepted and captured by an English vessel called the *Nicholas of the Tower*, which in the evening dropped anchor in the Downs. His death-warrant was announced by the captain in these words :

*“ The gaudy, blabbing and remorseful day
Is crept into the bosom of the sea ;
And now loud-howling wolves arouse the jades
That drag the tragic melancholy night ;
Who, with their drowsy, slow and flagging wings,
Clip dead men's graves, and from their misty jaws
Breathe foul contagious darkness in the air.
Therefore bring forth the soldiers of our prize ;
For, whilst our pinnace anchors in the Downs,
Here shall they make their ransom on the sand,
Or with their blood stain this discoloured shore.”*

Suffolk was beheaded and his body flung upon the sands near Dover. Soon after this the commons revolted under the leadership of a soldier named Cade, a handsome, clever man, who called himself John Mortimer, the Duke of York's cousin. Raising nearly fifty thousand men Cade marched to Blackheath and

then fell back to Sevenoaks, where he defeated the King's army, and afterwards entered London.

Lord Say was murdered by the rebels. The King hurried for refuge to the strong castle of Kenilworth, where he remained until the insurrection was broken, and Cade was slain by Alexander Iden, an esquire of Kent.

But hardly had the menace of this danger passed away than a greater peril arose to shake the throne of King Henry.

The Duke of York, with his sons Edward and Richard, marched with an army of Irish levies to Dartford in Kent, and proclaimed that he had come to pluck the crown from feeble Henry's head. The Duke of Buckingham was sent to parley with him, and he induced York to accompany him to the tent of the King. Thereupon Margaret and Somerset urged Henry to arrest the Duke. Clifford, and his son a brutal soldier from the North of England, counselled them to hale him to the Tower and chop away his factious head. Salisbury and Warwick, however, soon showed that they were ranged upon the Yorkist side. When the meeting was broken up, York and his soldiers fell back upon Saint Alban's, and there the first battle between Lancaster and York was fought. Clifford was slain and was borne out of the battle by his son, who swore in his fierce anger never to spare a member of the House of York.

The Lancastrians had barricaded the streets of St. Albans, but Warwick, with his archers, broke through the gardens behind the houses, and when the day was over, Henry was a prisoner in the hands of the victorious Yorkists.

A peace was afterwards proclaimed, and in 1460 the

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King agreed to the suggestion made by Parliament, that on his own death the Duke of York and his heirs should succeed to the crown of England.

Great was the rage of Queen Margaret when she heard what had been done. Her son Edward was now disinherited, and she herself was destined to lose her proud position. Her hatred to York, great before, out-blazed in fury, and with all the power of her beauty she drew around her the Lancastrian peers and commoners.

Meanwhile York and his sons had withdrawn to Sandal Castle, near Wakefield, and there a strong army came up on a dark December day and attacked them. Nothing could stand against the fury of Clifford. The Yorkists were driven into the open fields. Rutland, the youngest son of York, was seized by Clifford and mercilessly butchered. Three times did Richard make a lane for his father through the crowded Lancastrian ranks, and full as oft did Edward come with purple sword to beat the foemen back, but in the end the Duke was captured and dragged before the exultant Margaret. In mockery she put a paper crown upon his head, and jeered at his distress.

"O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide," said the fallen soldier, as the cruel woman flaunted a crimsoned handkerchief in his face. It was stained with the blood of young Rutland, and she bade him wipe his tears away with it. The butcher Clifford stood by, clutching the dagger which had taken the young lad's life, and as the Queen laid her hand upon her own dagger, he leaped forward and stabbed the Duke in the breast. In an instant the Queen had followed his example, and York fell dead. His head was hacked from his body and set up on the gates of York city, and

while his sons Edward and Richard were collecting their scattered forces near Mortimer's Cross and Warwick was hastening from London to join them, the burghers of the city saw, with white faces and sad hearts, the stained and mutilated head of one who was the descendant of kings, the proud and able man who bore the name of Richard Plantagenet.

But vengeance like a dreadful thundercloud was gathering above the fated heads of King Henry and Margaret. Edward and Richard, the soldier sons of the murdered Duke, soon gathered their men together, and inspired by one purpose hurried to meet Clifford and Northumberland. In the fierce breast of young Richard there blazed a fire of bitterest hatred. Raising his sword above his head as though he lifted up a cross, he said :

*" I cannot weep ; for all my body's moisture
Scarce serves to quench my furnace-burning heart :
Nor can my tongue unload my heart's great burthen ;
For selfsame wind that I should speak withal
Is kindling coals that fires all my breast,
And burns me up with flames that tears would quench.
To weep is to make less the depth of grief :
Tears then for babes ; blows and revenge for me !
Richard, I bear thy name ; I'll venge thy death,
Or die renowned by attempting it."*

Through the great gate of York over which the pale dead face of the murdered Duke looked out, the Lancastrian army marched until they encountered the Yorkists on Towton Moor, and there the fiercest battle in the long campaign was fought. Warwick had sworn that this time there should be no retreat. " I'll kill my

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horse," he said, "because I will not fly." His brother was slain, and Richard Plantagenet rushing over the field like a Fury until he encountered Clifford, smote with vengeful arm, and everywhere men fell or fled before him. Clifford was sorely wounded, and crawled away to die. Margaret and the Prince of Wales, seeing King Henry wandering aimlessly about the field, besought him to retire from the battle. He was a weak man more inclined for the study than the camp, and the rough times did not accord well with his disposition. He was glad, therefore, to steal away and rest upon a wooded hill which rose some distance from the moving panorama of war. There he mused.

*"Would I were dead ! if God's good will were so ;
For what is in this world but grief and woe ?
O God ! methinks it were a happy life,
To be no better than a homely swain ;
To sit upon a hill, as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the minutes how they run,
How many make the hour full complete ;
How many hours bring about the day ;
How many days will finish up the year ;
How many years a mortal man may live.
When this is known then to divide the times :
So many hours must I tend my flock ;
So many hours must I take my rest ;
So many hours must I contemplate ;
So many hours must I sport myself ;
So many days my ewes have been with young ;
So many weeks ere the poor fools will ean ;
So many years ere I shall shear the fleece :*

*So minutes, hours, days, months, and years,
Pass'd over to the end they were created,
Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave.
Ah, what a life were this ! how sweet ! how lovely !
Gives not the hawthorn-bush a sweeter shade
To shepherds looking on their silly sheep,
Than doth a rich embroider'd canopy
To kings that fear their subjects' treachery ?
O, yes, it doth ; a thousand-fold it doth.
And to conclude, the shepherd's homely curds,
His cold thin drink out of his leather bottle,
His wonted sleep under a fresh tree's shade,
All which secure and sweetly he enjoys,
Is far beyond a prince's delicates,
His viands sparkling in a golden cup,
His body couched in a curious bed,
When care, mistrust, and treason waits on him."*

The awful, bloody scenes of civil strife unfolded their horrors before him, fathers slaying their sons, sons their fathers, brothers their kinsmen ; and King Henry's heart grew sick and faint. He was aroused by the galloping of horses, and the Queen and the Prince of Wales dashed by in wild affright. " Fly, father, fly," cried the Prince, " Away ! for death doth hold us in pursuit." The King sprang into the saddle of a led horse, and soon the fugitives were racing towards the Scottish border.

A few weeks later some foresters in a wood in the North of England saw a solitary wayfarer coming along the glades. He had a prayer-book in his hand, and was reading. By his conversation they guessed that he was a man of high rank. He spoke of kings and queens and nobles.

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"Say, what art thou that talk'st of kings and queens?" said one of the foresters.

"More than I seem, and less than I was born to. Men may talk of kings, and why not I? I am a king in mind; and that's enough," was the reply.

"But, if thou be a king, where is thy crown?"

The men were closely observing the wayfarer, for they suspected that he was none other than the fugitive Henry, for whose arrest the new King, Edward of York, would give much. With slow, sad words King Henry replied:

*"My crown is in my heart, not on my head;
Not deck'd with diamonds and Indian stones,
Nor to be seen: my crown is call'd content:
A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy."*

At this the foresters laid hands upon him, and one said: "You are the king King Edward hath deposed; and we his subjects, sworn in all allegiance, will apprehend you as his enemy." They brought him to London, where by King Edward's order he was confined in the Tower.

Meanwhile Margaret, his Queen, had taken refuge at the Court of France. She was winning King Louis over to her side when Warwick spoiled her chances by arriving to sue the hand of the Lady Bona for King Edward. He had won the consent of Louis to this marriage of his sister when a messenger came from England with the tidings that King Edward had hurriedly married the widow of Lord Grey. Warwick was amazed when he heard the news, and in his anger vowed that he would no longer serve a perjured monarch. "I came from Edward as ambassador," he said, "but I return his sworn and mortal foe." Preparations were at once



"My crown is in my heart, not on my head."

made for an army to land on the English coasts. When news of the defection of Warwick was brought to King Edward, the nobles around him realised that a potent force was now arrayed against the House of York. Lord Hastings alone seemed to be unmoved. He did not favour the idea of an alliance with France, for, as he said :

*“ Let us be back’d with God and with the seas,
Which He hath given for fence impregnable,
And with their helps only defend ourselves ;
In them and in ourselves our safety lies.”*

His words were brave and truly English, but when the messenger added that the daughter of Warwick was to be married to King Henry’s son Edward, a change came over the face of Clarence, the brother of King Edward. It was known that he had hoped to marry Warwick’s daughter.

That night Clarence stole away from London and joined the forces of the Earl in Warwickshire. But King Edward was not minded to be hurled from the throne without an effort. He led his army to the Midlands, and here a great misfortune happened to him. He was surprised in his tent by Warwick and a party of French soldiers, made prisoner, and compelled to renounce the crown in favour of the imprisoned King Henry. His Queen fled into Sanctuary at Westminster. Gloucester, Hastings and Sir William Stanley, hearing that Edward had been removed to Middleham Castle, in Yorkshire, determined to effect his escape. They took him from the huntsmen who acted as his guards and galloped with him to Lynn, where a swift vessel conveyed him to Flanders, and he found a refuge with

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the Duke of Burgundy. He soon gathered a strong force and sailed once more to England, landing at Ravenspurgh, a little sea-port in Yorkshire, whence he made a rapid march and was joined by Gloucester, Hastings, and Sir John Montgomery.

A well-armed force marched to London and seized King Henry, who was once more flung into the Tower, and the main body, under Gloucester, hurried to give battle to the Earl of Warwick and the Lancastrians. They came up with him at Coventry, where Clarence changed sides again. Warwick retreated towards the south, and near Barnet the Lancastrians and Yorkists met in a fiercely contested battle. Montague and Warwick, brothers whose valour had been proved on many a hard-fought field, were both slain, and the army was broken and scattered.

Without a pause Edward, Clarence, and Gloucester swept towards Tewkesbury to attack Queen Margaret, the Prince of Wales, Somerset and Oxford. Again the Yorkists were victorious, and on the evening of a terrible day for the House of Lancaster the young Prince and his mother were dragged as prisoners into the presence of their enemies.

There was not much to be said, for the Yorkists were wild with the lust of battle. The young Prince was proud and headstrong, and his words were full of scorn. Drawing his dagger King Edward plunged his weapon into the lad's breast. Gloucester struck him as he fell, and Clarence finished the treacherous deed. With scarcely a look upon the dead Prince, Gloucester sprang upon his horse, and followed by his body-guard, spurred hard for London. He galloped through the night, and barely drew rein until he leaped from his saddle outside

the Tower of London. He had one other deed of blood to do, and as he strode across the drawbridge his white set face was terrible to look upon. The gentle King Henry was walking upon the terrace overlooking the battlements. Gloucester dismissed the officer who waited upon the King, and the two men stood face to face. After a few quick words Gloucester told the King the news of fatal Tewkesbury, and added, "Thy son I killed for his presumption."

The fair face of Henry grew even whiter than meditation, anxiety, and imprisonment had made it. He drew his tall and slender figure to its full height, and his eyes blazed as he looked down upon the withered misshapen body of his cruel opponent.

*"Hadst thou been kill'd when first thou didst presume,
Thou hadst not lived to kill a son of mine.
And thus I prophesy, that many a thousand,
Which now mistrust no parcel of my fear,
And many an old man's sigh and many a widow's,
And many an orphan's water-standing eye—
Men for their sons, wives for their husbands,
And orphans for their parents' timeless death—
Shall rue the hour that ever thou wast born."*

Richard drew back a pace. His sword flashed, and as he hissed the words, "I'll hear no more : die, prophet, in thy speech," he plunged the weapon into the heart of the King. Muttering a few words Henry fell back against the wall, and then slid helpless to the ground. Standing above him Gloucester again thrust his sword into his breast, and with a bitter laugh, as he watched the blood streaming into the crevices and between the stones, said :

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*"What, will the aspiring blood of Lancaster
Sink in the ground? I thought it would have mounted.
See how my sword weeps for the poor King's death!
O, may such purple tears be alway shed
From those that wish the downfall of our house!"*

He sheathed his sword and went away to greet King Edward with the news and swell the triumph which now filled the adherents of the House of York. The streets of London soon became brilliant with the flags and gay processions of the victorious Yorkists, and in his palace King Edward greeted the men who had fought so valiantly to secure his crown. Always a lover of pleasure he rejoiced to think that the long years of strife and bloodshed were now ended, and seated upon his throne, with Queen Elizabeth his wife and young Edward his son beside him, he dreamed of peace and stately ceremonies. As the babe was lifted up to receive the caresses of his uncles Clarence and Gloucester, King Edward said:

*"And now what rests but that we spend the time
With stately triumphs, mirthful comic shows,
Such as befit the pleasure of the court?
Sound drums and trumpets! farewell sour annoy!
For here, I hope, begins our lasting joy."*

Richard of Gloucester bent over the innocent babe and pressed his lips upon his white forehead. His face was hidden, but a cruel smile wreathed his lips, and as he turned away, he muttered with deadly meaning:

*"And, that I love the tree from whence thou sprang'st
Witness the loving kiss I give the fruit.
To say the truth, so Judas kiss'd his Master,
And cried 'all hail!' when as he meant all harm."*

King Richard the Third

PROMINENT among the stately figures which stood around Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, in the stormy days of the great civil strife in England, was his son, in later days known as Richard, Duke of Gloucester. His outward form, slight, uncouth, and misshapen, enshrined a spirit of wild fierce intensity, a mind of marvellous intellectual brilliancy, and a courage which was indomitable. In him all the inherited qualities of four centuries of warrior ancestors seemed to find their embodiment. He was destined to be the last of the Plantagenet Kings, and represented them completely in the worst and hardest side of their character.

Feudalism in many ways had produced a line of nobles and followers whose first and chiefest thought was strife and bloodshed. Power had degenerated into tyranny and self-seeking, hardihood into brutality and callousness. Side by side with much that was intellectual, graceful, and artistic, there was an element of savagery, so that the statesman and courtier who could found a college and endow a school of pious learning could also torture his prisoners and slaughter his enemies with unbridled ferocity.

For many years a fierce civil strife raged over England. Men on both sides had followed, on the path of blood, their own selfish ends, and cruelty, pillage, murder, and

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devastation had swept like a tempest over the land. One after another great figures arose, and were flung aside by the ruthless hand of treachery and war, wounded, broken, and destroyed. Black-faced Clifford, who took young Rutland upon his saddlebow and stabbed him savagely; knightly Warwick, who fell, beside his own slaughtered steed, the mark of many vengeful blows; Prince Edward, slain before his mother's eyes by the ruthless weapons of the Yorkist princes; Suffolk, executed by the rough justice of a ranger of the seas; King Henry, stabbed treacherously in the fortress of the Tower, almost within sight of his own palace at Westminster; all these were examples of the spirit which had been engendered by the times, and with these nobles thousands of the commoners of England had suffered and died.

The slight, misshapen figure which held the spirit of Richard of Gloucester was, nevertheless, the strongest of all the hard types which had been forged in the hot furnace of war and beaten out upon the anvil of civil commotion. His brother Edward was easily led, and too fond of pleasure. Clarence had conscience and a certain gentleness of spirit, but Richard was the embodiment and incarnation of the spirit of the Wars of the Roses, in all its fierceness, unscrupulousness and selfishness; and when he rose to the highest position in the realm, above men and society, maker of the laws and able to bend them to his purposes, he showed himself to be something almost beyond humanity, as a protagonist of Evil against Good.

Richard III. in his strength is unapproachable in invincible wickedness, brutal callousness, fiendish humour, boundless ambition, and in a hypocrisy that never

seemed to fail for a subterfuge, and a determination that nothing could shake.

As a King of England it is unfortunate for Richard that the portrait which will live for ever in the eyes of men is that one which was drawn by the hand of the dramatist rather than that which lies buried in the dusty histories of the records of England, but it can be said with fairness that the public records of his reign exhibit the historical King Richard in a very different light. His succession to the throne was certainly acceptable to the bulk of the nation ; his parliamentary skill was undoubted ; his vigilance against the foes of England unsleeping ; his benevolence and faithfulness to friends and servants of a high character ; the story of his assassinations is not supported by conclusive evidence ; and his public efficiency was perhaps greater than that of any of his predecessors. He was vigilant in the defence and improvements of our shores, and it was in his reign that, for the first time, the statutes of Parliament were drawn up in the English language.

It is, however, with the sinister figure of Richard as drawn by the dramatist that the play of Richard III. has to do. In this the King is described as having a withered distorted body, hunch-backed and deformed. He halted upon one thigh, and one arm was shrunk like a blasted sapling. He said that he was born with teeth, and came into the world so ill-made up that dogs barked at him as he limped by them. Nature rebelled when he first saw the light. The owl shrieked at his birth, the night-crow cried, dogs howled, hideous tempests shook down trees, the ravens and carrion birds croaked in dismal chorus, as though foreboding disaster to the

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world. His own mother said, and no words could be more suggestive nor more full of sorrow :

*“ Thou camest on earth to make the earth my hell.
A grievous burthen was thy birth to me ;
Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy ;
Thy schooldays frightful, desperate, wild, and furious,
Thy prime of manhood daring, bold, and venturous,
Thy age confirm'd, proud, subtle, bloody, treacherous ;
More mild, but yet more harmful, kind in hatred :
What comfortable hour canst thou name,
That ever graced me in thy company.”*

And when Richard frowned and smiled she went on to do that which a mother's heart would ever shrink from, namely to curse him at a time when she knew she would never see him again.

*“ Either thou wilt die, by God's just ordinance,
Ere from this war thou turn a conqueror,
Or I with grief and extreme age shall perish
And never look upon thy face again.
Therefore take with thee my most heavy curse ;
Which, in the day of battle, tire thee more
Than all the complete armour that thou wear'st !
My prayers on the adverse party fight ;
And there the little souls of Edward's children
Whisper the spirits of thine enemies,
And promise them success and victory.
Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end ;
Shame serves thy life and doth thy death attend.”*

When Richard marched off to meet his enemies on his last field of battle he was dowered with his mother's curse.

Outwardly he did not appear to feel the denunciation much, but her words sank deep into his soul, and at night his conscience awoke afresh and terrified him. His sleep was always disturbed with frightful dreams, and he used to writhe and toss upon his bed and cry out in terror, while the perspiration stood cold upon his brow. He hated his own deformity, and felt that evil had somehow shaped him for its own. This is how he put it to himself :

*“ Then, since the heavens have shaped my body so,
Let hell make crook’d my mind to answer it.
I have no brother. I am like no brother.
And this word ‘ love ’ which grey-beards call divine
Be resident in men like one another, but not in me.
I am myself alone.”*

It was this sense of isolation and apartness from mankind which deepened his malignancy, he felt no touch of kinship and no kindly human feeling, and his hatred became a master passion. He knew himself to be the intellectual superior of all about him, for he had no equal in mental quickness. He was never at a loss for a retort, could always evolve a deep and subtle plan even at a moment’s notice, and his vicious rapier-like wit was always ready with a plausible story, a convincing lie or an excuse. With cleverness he was subtle, with simplicity malicious, with irresolution mocking, with weakness cruel, and with every one and everything he was himself alone, a “ plain devil ” with dissembling word and mocking gibe. He never failed because of irresolution, for his energy was intense and volcanic. His swiftness in thought and action paralysed his opponents, and his concentration of every atom of his

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being upon one point gave a tenfold power to his attacks. His mind grasped a problem in an instant, and while other men were thinking out the best course to be followed, Richard had struck into it and was already far on the way. He could grasp the significance of a message long before the full sentences were spoken, and sometimes diverted its course by a swift suggestion. While other men were weighing the risks and calculating the odds for or against he had reached the heart of the problem and was ready to act. And even when confronted by the intuition of women, that swift instinct which usually flies far ahead of reasoned thought, his intellect reasoned more quickly, and his remorseless energy swept the weaker vessel to its doom.

And Richard was unique in wickedness in that he seemed at the very beginning to have mapped out the whole area of his operations. With most evil-doers crime is a process of step by step, effect involves consequence, and a man having taken one step is compelled by the sheer logic of events to plunge deeper and deeper until he becomes entirely immersed. Usually an evil plan is never outlined beyond the first decisive action, and the man takes the first step without considering what may arise to drive him onward on the career of crime. But Richard marked out his plan of evil as a general marks out the movements of a great campaign. He saw afar off that point which he had marked out as his goal. He recognised and isolated every factor in the problem, and decided as to its ultimate result, massing his forces and concentrating his strength upon point after point. He attended to every detail, and followed out his purpose with relentless energy, without haste and without rest.

Once resolved, nothing was allowed to turn him aside from the accomplishment of his will, beauty of women or of children, youth, age, rank, helplessness, strength, loyalty, brotherly affection, motherly concern, hatred of enemies, obligation, duty ; he brushed all these aside, and crushed everything which stood in his way with the callous unconsciousness of a machine. He seemed to have no shadow of remorse, no compunction, and hardly a trace of affection. Conscience he laughed at and said that it was but a thing devised to keep the strong in awe. Justice he derided, and in his pride seemed to laugh at the reality of eternal things and at the name of God. He played with everything secular and sacred, and took an exquisite delight in deriding religion. His masterpiece of hypocrisy is illustrated in the scene where the citizens of London came to offer him the rule of England. With many a sigh of feigned humility Richard was discovered with a prayer-book in his hand, walking between two Bishops. His words were pious, and very gentle :

*“ I rather do beseech you pardon me
Who, earnest in the service of my God,
Neglect the visitation of my friends.”*

The Duke of Buckingham, who had arranged the scene, appeared disappointed when Richard refused the proffered honour, and in his impatience rapped out a little oath, “ zounds,” which means “ God’s wounds.” The Bishops did not notice the expression, but it did not escape the pious Richard, for with a gentle wave of the hand and an upturned eye he said with deep concern, “ O, do not swear, my lord of Buckingham,” and afterwards with that sweet resignation which so well becomes an earnest, unworldly, devout soul rudely interrupted

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in its religious contemplations by worldly men, he turned to the Bishops with a saintly air, and murmured, "Come, let us to our holy task again. Farewell, good cousin, farewell, gentle friends"; and Buckingham, the Lord Mayor of London and the Sheriffs went out softly on tiptoe, thinking shame to themselves for thus disturbing a saint at his devotions. The hypocrisy of the scene is an example of the hardihood of an evil soul which was exultantly defying the most sacred things, and laughing at the name of God.

Richard passed like an avenger over the tempestuous scenes of the strife between York and Lancaster, and wherever he appeared he added to the confusion or deepened the tragedy. Then the day came when the Lancastrians were broken and dispersed, and King Edward IV. was seated upon the throne. The noise of battle has died away, and the mellow tones of bells of rejoicing ring over London. It is a bright sunny day in June, and the streets of the city are laughing with the gladness of peace after ninety years of cruel war. It is somewhere between Bishopsgate and the Tower of London. The quaint gabled houses with their latticed windows, rural-looking porches and overhanging pent-house doors are smiling in the sunlight. Flags are waving from windows, and flowers are strewn in the streets. A few red rose leaves are drifting idly before a gentle wind, as though speaking of the scattered House of Lancaster, and some white roses, fallen from a window, are lying on the pavement. A withered, misshapen figure is seen coming down the street. The man is richly dressed in costly silks and sable-trimmed garments, jewels flash from his velvet bonnet and glitter on his dagger and sword. His face is pale, his hands are

restless, and his piercing eyes rove in every direction as though he seeks a foe or fears an ambuscade. He smiles as he watches the red rose petals drifting before the wind, and his shadow, cast by the mounting sun, falls across the white roses lying near his feet. Then he speaks, for he remembers the badge of his House, the Sun of York.

*“ Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths ;
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments ;
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.
Grim-visaged war hath smooth'd his wrinkled front ;
And now, instead of mounting barbed steeds
To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,
He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.
But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass ;
I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph ;
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up.
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them ;
Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
Have no delight to pass away the time,*

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*Unless to spy my shadow in the sun,
And descant on mine own deformity :
And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain,
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams,
To set my brother Clarence and the king
In deadly hate the one against the other :
And if King Edward be as true and just
As I am subtle, false and treacherous,
This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up,
About a prophecy, which says that G
Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be."*

A sound of marching feet breaks on his ear, and, coming along the street, an officer and armed guard are seen escorting a prisoner. He is a man of gracious carriage and handsome face, evidently a noble of highest rank. Richard's words proclaim his name.

"Dive, thoughts, down to my soul : here Clarence comes."

It is the brother of King Edward, the Duke of Clarence, now on his way to imprisonment in the Tower. He is the first of Richard's victims. Hardly has he passed by and Gloucester entered another street when a funeral procession winds slowly along. It is that of the murdered King Henry VI., and the Earl of Warwick's youngest daughter, the Lady Anne, is chief among the mourners. She has good cause to hate the Duke of Gloucester, for she is the widow of that young Prince Edward who had been stabbed at Tewkesbury



“I am determined to prove a villain,
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.”

by Richard and his brothers. Yet before the day was out the plausible tongue of Gloucester had won her consent to a second marriage with himself. No wonder that Richard laughed to himself when he recalled his own words that he was not fitted by nature to be a lover :

*“ I do mistake my person all this while :
Upon my life, she finds, although I cannot,
Myself to be a marvellous proper man.
I’ll be at charges for a looking-glass
And entertain some score or two of tailors,
To study fashions to adorn my body :
Since I am crept in favour with myself,
I will maintain it with some little cost.
But first I’ll turn yon fellow in his grave ;
And then return lamenting to my love.
Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass,
That I may see my shadow as I pass.”*

And so towards White-Friars the sombre procession made its way, with Gloucester chuckling under his breath, and grimacing at his shadow as it fell upon the rough cobble-stones of the narrow street.

In King Edward’s palace, where Queen Elizabeth and her kinsmen, Lord Grey and Lord Rivers, were waiting upon the King, his presence brought confusion and strife. Cunningly Richard set one against the other and made it seem as though the imprisonment of Clarence had been brought about by the intrigues of the Woodville party.

That night two dark-browed murderous-looking villains had an interview with Richard, and when they left they carried with them a token which would admit them without question to the Tower of London, and a

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commission which charged the Lieutenant of the prison to deliver the Duke of Clarence to their keeping.

The scene is now within a chamber in the Tower. It is early morning. The swiftly flowing Thames is washing past the stones of the old grey pile which Julius Cæsar founded. Traitor's Gate frowns upon the boatmen drifting by, and green moss clings to the steps which have been trodden by so many sad and hopeless men and women. The light of day struggles through a narrow, heavily-barred window into the room where a pale, heavy-eyed prisoner sits in painful and most sombre thought. He has been torn from his family, banished from his brother's presence, deprived of rank, dignities and freedom, and now sits under the oppression of a vivid dream which has terrified his soul. Passing the sentinels at the outer gate are two cloaked men, but Clarence knows nothing of their coming, as yet, and his dream is the weight which presses upon his mind. Brakenbury, the Lieutenant of the Tower, enters, and notes with sympathetic attention the sad looks of his noble charge. He, too, knows nothing of the dark-browed men whose footsteps are now almost sounding on the stone steps of the prison.

"Why looks your grace so heavily to-day?" was his greeting.

Clarence started, and lifting up his eyes, said :

*"O, I have pass'd a miserable night,
So full of ugly sights, of ghastly dreams,
That, as I am a Christian faithful man,
I would not spend another such a night,
Though 'twere to buy a world of happy days,
So full of dismal terror was the time !*

*Methoughts that I had broken from the Tower,
And was embark'd to cross to Burgundy ;
And, in my company, my brother Gloucester ;
Who from my cabin tempted me to walk
Upon the hatches : thence we look'd toward England,
And cited up a thousand fearful times,
During the wars of York and Lancaster,
That had befall'n us. As we paced along
Upon the giddy footing of the hatches,
Methought that Gloucester stumbled ; and, in falling,
Struck me, that thought to stay him, overboard,
Into the tumbling billows of the main.
Lord, Lord ! methought, what pain it was to drown !
What dreadful noise of waters in mine ears !
What ugly sights of death within mine eyes !
Methought I saw a thousand fearful wrecks ;
Ten thousand men that fishes gnaw'd upon ;
Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,
Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
All scattered in the bottom of the sea :
Some lay in dead men's skulls ; and in those holes
Where eyes did once inhabit, there were crept,
As 'twere in scorn of eyes, reflecting gems,
Which woo'd the slimy bottom of the deep,
And mock'd the dead bones that lay scattered by."*

He paused, and passed his hand across his eyes as though to shut out the awful vision. Brakenbury murmured :

*" Had you such leisure in the time of death
To gaze upon the secrets of the deep ? "*

Clarence drew a long breath, and watched the light stealing into his room.

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*“ Methought I had ; and often did I strive
 To yield the ghost : but still the envious flood
 Kept in my soul, and would not let it forth
 To seek the empty, vast and wandering air ;
 But smothered it within my panting bulk,
 Which almost burst to belch it in the sea.
 My dream was lengthened after life ;
 O, then began the tempest of my soul,
 Who passed, methought, the melancholy flood,
 With that grim ferryman which poets write of,
 Unto the kingdom of perpetual night.
 The first that there did greet my stranger soul,
 Was my great father-in-law, renowned Warwick ;
 Who cried aloud, ‘ What scourge for perjury
 Can this dark monarchy afford false Clarence ? ’
 And so he vanish’d : then came wandering by
 A shadow like an angel, with bright hair
 Dabbled in blood ; and he squeak’d out aloud,
 ‘ Clarence is come ; false, fleeting, perjured Clarence,
 That stabb’d me in the field by Tewksbury :
 Seize on him, Furies, take him to your torments ! ’
 With that, methoughts, a legion of foul fiends
 Environ’d me about, and howled in mine ears
 Such hideous cries, that with the very noise
 I trembling waked, and for a season after
 Could not believe but that I was in hell,
 Such terrible impression made the dream.”*

The poor Duke trembled at the awful memory, and falling upon his knees he clasped his hands and prayed, “ O God ! if my deep prayers cannot appease Thee, but Thou wilt be avenged on my misdeeds, yet execute Thy wrath in me alone ; O, spare my guiltless wife and my

poor children." He arose, wiped the tears from his eyes, and with a piteous sigh walked slowly to his bed. He lay for a few minutes, and then his tired eyelids closed and he fell asleep. Brakenbury stood beside him, and as he noted the pale, sorrow-laden face, said solemnly :

*"Sorrow breaks seasons and reposing hours,
Makes the night morning and the noontide night.
Princes have but their titles for their glories,
An outward honour for an inward toil ;
And, for unfelt imagination,
They often feel a world of restless cares :
So that, betwixt their titles and low names,
There's nothing differs but the outward fame."*

The quiet pushing of the door startled him, and two men stepped into the room. They cast a look upon the unconscious sleeper, and handed a paper to the Lieutenant. He read it with misgiving, and with a last look at Clarence turned away, and left the murderers to their evil work. Clarence tossed restlessly upon his couch, and then, as though suspecting evil, opened his eyes. He spoke to the men, and when he divined their errand, pleaded with them, reminding them that he was the brother of King Edward, and that Richard of Gloucester was his loving friend. They laughed and said that Gloucester was as kind as snow in harvest, and had sent them on their mission. One of the soldiers relented, and would have spared the Duke, but the other reminded him of the promised reward, and together they sprang upon the unarmed prisoner. He was stabbed without mercy, and his dead body flung into a wine-butt. Hastily the two murderers returned to Richard and let

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him know that the terrible deed had been accomplished. Immediately Gloucester went off to the palace of King Edward, and accused the nobles of the Queen's party of the death of Clarence.

After this events moved quickly. The King was taken ill, and soon afterwards died. His son the young Prince Edward was at Ludlow. Gloucester ordered that he should be brought at once to London to be crowned under the title of Edward V. Richard and the Duke of Buckingham were to escort him to the capital, and one of the most cruel of all the plots of this wicked man was set in operation against the lives of the Prince and his brother, young Richard of York. But before Gloucester rode off, Lord Rivers, Lord Grey and Sir Thomas Vaughan, all of the party of the Queen, were arrested by his orders, and imprisoned in Pomfret Castle, where shortly afterwards they were executed.

People were now beginning to tremble at the name of Richard of Gloucester ; even the citizens, who only knew of him by repute, moved cautiously and guarded their speech lest spies should carry their words to the ears of the man they were learning to dread. As one citizen said to another in the streets of London :

*“ When clouds appear, wise men put on their cloaks ;
When great leaves fall, the winter is at hand ;
When the sun sets, who doth not look for night ?
Untimely storms make men expect a dearth.
All may be well ; but, if God sort it so,
'Tis more than we deserve, or I expect.”*

But when Prince Edward rode into London all seemed to promise well. He was greeted by a stately procession of men of the highest rank, and received with many a

cheer of welcome. He missed, however, the presence of his mother, Queen Elizabeth, and his brother, the Duke of York, who had taken sanctuary at Westminster. Cardinal Bouchier and Lord Hastings were sent to invite them to join the happy gathering in London, and when they came they learned that King Edward and his brother of York were to lodge in the Tower until the time of the coronation ceremony.

Buckingham was now the chief adviser of Gloucester, if such a thing could be said of one who needed no counsellor, and it was necessary for Lord Hastings to be included in the few who stood around Richard. When Hastings refused to join in a plot against the King he was arrested on a charge of witchcraft and, by the order of Gloucester, beheaded on the green within the Tower. A few days later the Lord Mayor and citizens of London presented their petition to the Protector to assume the crown and become King Richard III. He refused for the time being, but the plot was ripening which would sweep his young nephews from the path.

Outside the Tower of London, when the sun was setting, a number of ladies of highest rank were standing looking up at its cold grey walls and striving to catch a glimpse of the Princes imprisoned within. Queen Elizabeth, the old Duchess of York, the Duchess of Gloucester, and Lady Margaret Plantagenet the young daughter of the murdered Clarence, had thus met before the full blast of the storm burst over their heads. Again and again they tried to learn something from the stern, silent forbidding Tower, but their desire was vain. Nothing could be gathered from the huge walls of ancient stone, and dark clouds were fast ushering in the night. At length they turned away, but Queen

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Elizabeth was reluctant to go without a sight of her children.

“*Stay,*” she said to her companions, “*yet look back with me unto the Tower.*”

*Pity, you ancient stones, those tender babes
Whom envy hath immured within your walls !
Rough cradle for such little pretty ones !
Rude ragged nurse, old sullen playfellow
For tender princes, use my babies well !
So foolish sorrow bids your stones farewell.”*

With many a backward look they passed along the narrow street which led to London Bridge, but the Queen never saw her bold and brave young sons again. Three men named Tyrrel, Dighton and Forrest were even now waiting impatiently for darkness to shroud the Tower in order that they might murder the Princes as they slept. Next morning Tyrrel waited in the ante-chamber of King Richard's palace to announce the execution of the wicked deed. As he waited he went over to himself the details of the tragedy.

“*The tyrannous and bloody deed is done,
The most arch act of piteous massacre
That ever yet this land was guilty of.
Dighton and Forrest, whom I did suborn
To do this ruthless piece of butchery,
Although they were flesh'd villains, bloody dogs,
Melting with tenderness and kind compassion
Wept like two children in their deaths' sad stories.
'Lo, thus,' quoth Dighton, 'lay those tender babes' :
'Thus, thus,' quoth Forrest, 'girdling one another
Within their innocent alabaster arms :
Their lips were four red roses on a stalk,*



" Pity, you ancient stones, those tender babes,
Whom envy hath immured within your walls ! "

*Which in their summer beauty kiss'd each other.
 A book of prayers on their pillow lay ;
 Which once,' quoth Forrest, 'almost changed my mind ;
 But O ! the devil'—there the villain stopp'd ;
 While Dighton thus told on : ' We smothered
 The most replenished sweet work of nature
 That from the prime creation e'er she framed.'
 Thus both are gone with conscience and remorse ;
 They could not speak ; and so I left them both,
 To bring this tidings to the bloody king."*

It was indeed the most arch act of piteous massacre that ever the land of England was guilty of, but it did not seem to trouble the mind of the triumphant Richard III. On the contrary, all the obstacles in his way had now been removed, and he stood on the peak towards which his ambitious efforts had been for many years directed. And yet the cloud no bigger than a man's hand, which foretold the breaking of the tempest which would destroy him, was even now drifting across the expanse of Richard's sky.

Many years before, a young lad named Henry Richmond, a descendant of John of Gaunt by his marriage with Catherine Swynford, had been sent off for safety to Brittany in order that the heir of the great Beaufort family might not be involved in the wreck of the Lancastrians. His father, Edmund Tudor, Earl of Richmond, had married Margaret Beaufort. Henry was now a man. His exile and the dangers of his position had made him serious, silent, suspicious, and reserved. He was selfish and cold, but loved fine clothes, bright jewels, and glittering pageants. In person he was of the middle height, with grey eyes, and

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dark brown hair. His face was always pale, but a bright red wart was conspicuous on his cheek. He was no soldier, and hated the strife of battle. King Richard was his superior in everything, and looked upon him as a cowardly runagate. Yet Richmond, by the grace of God, was destined to hurl the powerful Richard from his throne.

He crossed from Brittany and landed at Pembroke in Wales, where he was joined by Sir Walter Herbert, Sir Gilbert Talbot, Sir William Stanley, and the Earls of Oxford and Pembroke. Buckingham, who had now broken away from Richard, also raised an army, but was defeated and executed. Richmond pressed on towards Tamworth, and finally encamped near Bosworth Field, in Leicestershire. King Richard gathered the northern lords and squires ; and Norfolk from the east, Brakenbury from the south-east and Lovel from the south-west soon joined him with a strong army in the town of Leicester.

Lord Stanley, with the men of Lancashire and Cheshire, delayed because, he said, that he was ill of the "sweating sickness." Afterwards he deserted the King on the field of battle, and was the main cause of his overthrow. Richard chose his battle-ground with rare skill, making a marsh protect the right wing of his army, and taking a position which compelled his enemy's archers to fight with the sun in their faces. But on the day of battle the sun did not shine, heavy mists rolled up from the marsh, and the sullen sky seemed to lour and frown upon the armies. It was a striking contrast to the day when Richard of Gloucester stood in the streets of London and the bells were everywhere ringing out the triumph of the House of York. Now, the sun

did not appear, and the last of the Plantagenets went to his fate in gloom and shadow. "A black day will it be to somebody," muttered Richard, as he buckled on his armour while the showery mist dimmed the lustre of his steel as though tears were raining upon one who was doomed, "but what is that to me more than to Richmond? for the self-same heaven that frowns on me looks sadly upon him."

But if the day looked dark, the night had been full of terror for the King. When he had made all his preparations for the battle he had retired to his tent to snatch a few hours rest before the hour of midnight summoned him to arm for the conflict. He had never been able to enjoy sound sleep, for in the hours when the strong will was disarmed by slumber, conscience awoke to full vigour, and Richard was tortured with terrible dreams.

Now, in his last night upon earth, he tossed upon his bed, tormented by visions and dreams which shook his soul with terror, made his hair stand on end, and covered his face with cold perspiration. He thought the ghosts of all whom he had murdered came to him and prophesied disaster on the morrow. Prince Edward, Henry VI., Clarence, Rivers, Grey, Vaughan, Hastings, Edward V., young Richard of York, Lady Anne his own wife, and, last of all the awful line, Buckingham. As each pointed the finger at him, King Richard writhed upon his bed, and at last a scream burst from his lips, and with a convulsive leap he flung the coverings from him and sat upright, peering like a terror-stricken malefactor into the gloom of the tent. A lantern burned dimly on the table, and sombre figures seemed to be lurking in the shadows.

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*"Give me another horse : bind up my wounds.
 Have mercy, Jesu !—Soft ! I did but dream.
 O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me !
 The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight.
 Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
 What do I fear ? myself ? there's none else by :
 Richard loves Richard ; that is, I am I.
 Is there a murderer here ? No. Yes, I am :
 Then fly. What, from myself ? Great reason why :
 Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself ?
 Alack, I love myself. Wherefore ? for any good
 That I myself have done unto myself ?
 O, no ! alas, I rather hate myself
 For hateful deeds committed by myself !
 I am a villain : yet I lie, I am not.
 Fool, of thyself speak well : fool, do not flatter.
 My conscience hath a thousand several tongues
 And every tongue brings in a several tale,
 And every tale condemns me for a villain."*

His scream had brought in his faithful attendant, Rateliff. It was now cock-crow. Richard leaped from his bed, and when his favourite horse, White Surrey, was brought, he sprang into the saddle with all his old fire, but one who had the power to read might have seen the portent of death upon his face.

When the trumpets gave the signal for the onset Richard was first in the attack. Five brave knights he rolled in the dust, thinking that each one he killed was Richmond, his enemy. His horse was shot dead beneath him. He disengaged himself from the prostrate animal and sprang to meet a foeman whom he at last recognised to be the man he had so long sought in vain.

Richmond fought with the fury of one who realises that his foeman is skilled with the sword beyond ordinary men, and his associates hurried to his assistance, whereupon Richard was beaten down and slain. His crown, struck off his helmet, was found under a hawthorn bush by Lord Stanley, who placed it upon the head of Richmond, and a mighty shout arose, "God save King Harry! God save King Harry!" Brakenbury, Ratcliff, Ferrers and Theobald died with Richard, and the army of the Yorkists melted away when the soldiers knew that the King was slain.

Later, King Henry VII. married the Lady Elizabeth of York, and thus the White and Red Roses were joined together and the long strife of ninety years came to an end. Richmond himself expressed the joy of the nation when he said :

*" O, now let Richmond and Elizabeth,
The true succeders of each royal house,
By God's fair ordinance conjoin together !
And let their heirs, God, if thy will be so,
Enrich the time to come with smooth-faced peace,
With smiling plenty and fair prosperous days !
Abate the edge of traitors, gracious Lord,
That would reduce these bloody days again,
And make poor England weep in streams of blood !
Let them not live to taste this land's increase,
That would with treason wound this fair land's peace !
Now civil wounds are stopp'd, peace lives again :
That she may long live here, God say amen !*

King Henry the Eighth

ON the death of Richard III., Henry of Richmond ascended the throne and reigned some twenty-four years. Although by his marriage with Elizabeth of York he might be said to have united the two Houses, he always cherished animosity against the Yorkists, and dealt severely with any who opposed him. The rebellions under Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck caused him much disquiet and later movements led to the execution of young Richard of Warwick.

Henry reminded his first Parliament that his great victory at Bosworth Field was God's testimony to his just hereditary title. He was never popular with the people. His cold, selfish and oppressive dealings alienated many ; while his ingratitude, as shown in the execution of Stanley, the noble who had placed the crown upon his head on the field of battle, chilled those who were in his service. He more than once declared war against France and against Scotland, but never proceeded to hostilities, and it was suspected that Henry and his ministers fomented misunderstandings in order to raise heavy subsidies, which were afterwards applied to his own purposes.

Two lawyers, Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley, became his favourites. They were experts in extortion, dexterously perverting existing laws and reviving

obsolete ones, so that while guilty people were heavily punished the most innocent were obliged to pay enormous fines for imaginary offences.

Having lost the Queen and his eldest son by death Henry tried to arrange a new marriage. In the midst of his scheming he was struck down by illness and died in April 1509. He had seven children. Arthur, the eldest son, married Katharine of Arragon but died a few months later. Three children died in infancy. The third daughter, Margaret, was married three times and became the grandmother of Mary, Queen of Scots. The fourth daughter, Mary, was married twice, and by her second marriage with Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, became grandmother of Lady Jane Grey.

Henry, his second son, ascended the throne as King Henry VIII. He was born at Greenwich 1491, and was created Duke of York, then Prince of Wales on the death of his brother. His first union in marriage was with his sister-in-law, Katharine of Arragon. This, though considered unlawful in its nature, was sanctioned by the authority of the Pope. Mary, who afterwards became Queen, was the only survivor of the children of this marriage.

Henry VIII. was a youth of nineteen when he ascended the throne. In person he was tall and stalwart with thick hair clustering about a fair round face. He excelled in all forms of athletic exercises and was famed for his skill with weapons, and excellence in hunting. He combined the genial strength of the Yorkist with the caution and ambitious self-restraint of the Lancastrian, and had the instincts of a soldier as well as of a statesman. Shrewd and far-seeing he was also proud and self-willed, and hid a good deal of his

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father's cold selfishness under the outer semblance of jovial good humour. When he had finished with an instrument he could cast it aside without a moment's thought or compunction. He was intensely patriotic, loved England, and was always popular with his subjects, even when they could not but condemn his actions. His father, despite all the limitations of a hard and treacherous nature, had secured the dynasty, reduced the land to order, favoured its commerce, brought the remnants of the feudal nobility into something like obedience, and established quiet within his realm. Henry VIII, therefore might have considered that his path was a straight and fairly easy one. But to the understanding mind the times were very critical, The old landmarks had been beaten down, the old feudal nobility destroyed or weakened, and new forces, social, political, and religious, were making themselves manifest.

It was the beginning of a new epoch and the foundations of modern states were being laid. In 1492 Spanish and Portuguese sailors had opened the way to a new world across the seas, and the marvellous portals of colonial Empire were being flung open to the most enterprising spirits of the kingdoms of Europe. France and Spain were the first to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them. England had yet to learn that her greatest power and mightiest rule were to lie upon the seas and beyond them.

Undoubtedly there were men in England who realised that there was a great future for English statesmanship in the Councils of Europe. The man who saw this most clearly was Thomas Wolsey, afterwards known as Cardinal Wolsey. He was born at Ipswich in the year 1471, the son of Robert Wolsey and Joan his wife.

Robert Wolsey was a grazier and wool-merchant, a man of considerable means. England at that time supplied the markets of Europe with wool, and the growers and staplers had large and profitable businesses. Thomas Wolsey went to Oxford University at an early age, became Bachelor of Arts when he was fifteen, and later was made a Fellow of Magdalen College. His advancement in the Church was very rapid. In 1501 chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, five years later secretary to the Bishop of Winchester and in the service of Henry VII., made King's Almoner in 1508, and afterwards a member of the King's Council. Raised to the bishopric of Lincoln in 1514 and then to the archbishopric of York. A year later he was created Cardinal.

Thus before he had passed his forty-fifth year Wolsey had attained the highest ecclesiastical dignity it was in the power of the Roman hierarchy to bestow, and a few years later he was freely spoken of as a probable head of the Papacy. He was the ablest man in England and one of the greatest statesmen of his day. Able, proud, ostentatious, and relentless to his opponents, he was much loved by those whom he admitted to his confidence, although always hated by those who envied his position and vast wealth. Jealous and distrustful of the new learning which was changing the thought of Europe, he nevertheless fostered scholarship and bestowed large estates on a college at Oxford which he called Cardinal's College (afterwards Christ Church), and on a Grammar School or preparatory College at Ipswich. Hampton Court and Whitehall Palace testify to the lavish expenditure of his riches.

Among his most powerful enemies were the Duke of

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Buckingham (son of the Buckingham executed by Richard III.), who claimed to be next heir if Henry died without issue ; the Duke of Norfolk, the greatest nobleman in England, uncle of the Lady Anne Boleyn ; and Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, who married Mary, the sister of Henry VIII. These men, the representatives of ancient houses, looked with scorn upon the "upstart" Wolsey and resented alike his haughtiness and possession of great riches. His powers as Prince of the Church, Legate and European statesman they looked upon as dangerous, not only to the order they represented but also to the nation, while his undoubted influence over King Henry filled them with jealous fury. The movements and unrest of Europe, where France, Spain, the Emperor Maximilian and the Papacy were striving against each other for the pre-eminence, were beyond their powers of statesmanship, and they watched with anger the skilful moves of the great diplomatic game being played out by Cardinal Wolsey.

Every year some new combination was formed. Now it was Ferdinand and Maximilian against Louis XII. of France. Again England confirmed its alliance with Spain. And yet again an alliance was made between Henry and the King of France. Constant movement and almost bewildering change perplexed men of the old feudal type, while they afforded a keen joy to the subtle, persistent intellect of a man like Wolsey. In 1520 the meeting of the Kings of France and England in the vale of Andren, a pleasant tract of fertile country between Guynes, a town in Picardy belonging to England, and Arde, a town in Picardy belonging to the French, enabled Wolsey to exhibit in striking degree his

own wealth and love of ostentation, and the dignity of King Henry VIII. From its splendour the gathering became known as the "Field of the Cloth of Gold." The Duke of Norfolk thus narrated some of its glories to Buckingham and Abergavenny. They had met in an antechamber of the palace of King Henry in London.

*"Each following day
Became the next day's master, till the last
Made former wonders its. To-day the French,
All clinkant, all in gold, like heathen gods,
Shone down the English ; and to-morrow they
Made Britain India : every man that stood
Show'd like a mine."*

"Many have broken their backs with laying manors on them for this great journey," said Buckingham, referring to the wasteful expenditure of the English nobles in preparing for the gathering. "Who did guide this great sport ?"

"The right reverend Cardinal of York," was the reply.

"No man's pie is freed from his ambitious finger," was the angry retort of Buckingham. "Why did he take upon himself, without the privity of the King, to appoint who should attend on him ?"

Buckingham had evidently been omitted by the Cardinal and the oversight or insult rankled. He growled out a reference to low descent, by calling Wolsey a "keech," that is, a piece of fat or butcher's offal. It was a coarse insult which Norfolk turned aside by ascribing great qualities to the Cardinal.

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*"Surely, sir,
There's in him stuff that puts him to these ends ;
For, being not propp'd by ancestry, whose grace
Chalk successors their way, nor call'd upon
For high feats done to the crown ; neither allied
To eminent assistants ; but, spider-like,
Out of his self-drawing web, he gives us note,
The force of his own merit makes his way ;
A gift that heaven gives for him, which buys
A place next to the king."*

Abergavenny laughed and shrugged his shoulders at the mention of heavenly gifts.

"I can see his pride peep through each part of him ; whence has he that if not from hell ? "

"But," said Norfolk, "the peace between the French and us values not the cost that did conclude it. France hath flaw'd the league and attach'd our merchant's goods at Bordeaux."

This was indeed true, for in spite of all the outward profession of friendship upon the Field of the Cloth of Gold, the peace had hardly lasted until King Henry had returned to England. The conversation was now interrupted by the entrance of Wolsey. His guard preceded and followed him, a purse-bearer strode proudly along, and two secretaries, their hands full of papers, came close behind the great churchman. As his eyes fell upon Buckingham, the Cardinal gave him so withering a look that the Duke felt a chill go through him. It was like the baleful glance of a deadly serpent and meant—death. With a few cold words to his secretary, the Cardinal passed on his way to the King.

Norfolk saw the pale face of Buckingham flush with more than its wonted colour. "Be careful, my lord,"

he said, "anger is like a full-hot horse, who being allowed his way, self-mettle tires him."

"*Be advised ;
Heat not a furnace for your foe so hot
That it do singe yourself ; we may outrun,
By violent swiftness, that which we run at,
And lose by over-running. Know you not,
The fire that mounts the liquor till't run o'er
In seeming to augment it, wastes it ! Be advised :
I say again, there is no English soul
More stronger to direct you than yourself,
If with the sap of reason you would quench,
Or but allay, the fire of passion.*"

Norfolk had good cause to counsel Buckingham to become cool, for the toils, thrown by the hand of a skilful hunter, were even now about him and he was snared. The Duke's confessor John de la Car, his chancellor Gilbert Peck, and a monk named Nicholas Hopkins or Henton had been arrested by order of the Cardinal and put to the question in the presence of King Henry. It was declared by them that Buckingham had freely stated that if the King should die without issue the crown would be seized by himself ; that to Abergavenny, his son-in-law, he had vowed to be revenged upon the Cardinal ; and further that if the King had dared to threaten him with the Tower he would have done what his father had meant to do to the usurping Richard III.—thrust his dagger into him. These lies told without hesitation naturally aroused the wrath of Henry, and Buckingham was at once arrested and conveyed to the Tower of London. A short time afterwards he was tried before his peers in Westminster

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and condemned to death. A great crowd of people thronged to see him pass to the fatal barge which bore ill-fated prisoners to the Tower, and while the watermen brought the vessel near, Buckingham stood and looked for the last time upon Westminster Abbey and the stately buildings which clustered near it. Sir Nicholas Vaux bade the rowers prepare the barge for one who was a great nobleman.

“ *Nay, Sir Nicholas,
 Let it alone ; my state now will but mock me.
 When I came hither, I was lord high constable
 And Duke of Buckingham ; now, poor Edward Bohun :
 Yet I am richer than my base accusers,
 That never knew what truth meant : I now seal it ;
 And with that blood will make 'em one day groan for't.
 My noble father, Henry of Buckingham,
 Who first raised head against usurping Richard,
 Flying for succour to his servant Banister,
 Being distress'd, was by that wretch betray'd,
 And without trial fell ; God's peace be with him !
 Henry the Seventh succeeding, truly pitying
 My father's loss, like a most royal prince,
 Restored me to my honours, and out of ruins
 Made my name once more noble. Now his son,
 Henry the Eighth, life, honour, name and all
 That made me happy, at one stroke has taken
 For ever from the world. I had my trial,
 And must needs say, a noble one ; which makes me
 A little happier than my wretched father :
 Yet thus far we are one in fortunes : both
 Fell by our servants, by those men we loved most ;
 A most unnatural and faithless service !*

*Heaven has an end in all : yet, you that hear me,
This from a dying man receive as certain :
Where you are liberal of your loves and counsels
Be sure you be not loose ; for those you make friends
And give your hearts to, when they once perceive
The least rub in your fortunes, fall away
Like water from ye, never found again
But where they mean to sink ye. All good people,
Pray for me ! I must now forsake ye : the last hour
Of my long weary life is come upon me.
Farewell :
And when you would say something that is sad,
Speak how I fell. I have done ; and God forgive me ! ”*

He stepped into the barge, the oars dipped into the water, and slowly he drifted past the beautiful gardens and noble houses which stood in the Strand, past the Temple stairs and the gardens where the roses of York and Lancaster had been plucked, past the Fleet river, Bridewell Palace, and the great monastery of the Black Friars, and so beneath old London Bridge, until he saw beyond it the four grey turrets of the Tower of London and knew that the end of his journey was very near. Away over Westminster the sun was setting, and before the dark portal of Traitors' Gate opened to him the shadows had fallen and the barge came to rest beside the water-lapped steps in shadowed gloom.

And thus Buckingham passed to his sorrowful death. Wolsey had triumphed over one of the strongest of his enemies, but Norfolk and Charles Brandon yet remained, and the bright eyes of the young kinswoman of Norfolk, Lady Anne Boleyn, had introduced into the problem a new factor which was troubling the Cardinal.

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In his palace at York Place Wolsey had prepared a great banquet to be followed by dances. Many men of highest dignity and ladies of rank and beauty had accepted his invitation. Among them Anne Boleyn attracted attention by her grace and youthful charm. She was the daughter of Sir Thomas Boleyn and had resided for some time in the French court, where she acquired a bright manner and even the reputation of a wit. She was a striking contrast to the reserved and dignified Spanish princess Katharine of Arragon. When the merriment was at its height in the palace of Wolsey, King Henry and some of his favourites, masked, and dressed like shepherds, entered and craved leave to join the dancers. Henry was attracted by the beauty of Anne Boleyn and led her out in a stately measure. Before he unmasked she had won his affection, and a few weeks later she received the title of Marchioness of Pembroke with a thousand pounds a year to support the dignity. After this the conscientious scruples which King Henry cherished concerning his marriage with his sister-in-law grew apace, and letters were sent to Rome to urge yet more vigorously the necessity of a divorce from Katharine. Wolsey had been commissioned to press this business upon the papal authorities and Cardinal Campeius was sent to London. Norfolk, Suffolk, and the Lord Chamberlain in their jealousy of Wolsey were glad to lay the blame of all the intrigues against Katharine upon him. Said Norfolk :

*“ How holily he works in all his business !
And with what zeal ! for, now he has crack'd the league
Between us and the emperor, the queen's great nephew,
He dives into the king's soul, and there scatters*

*Dangers, doubts, wringing of the conscience,
Fears and despairs ; and all these for his marriage :
And out of all these to restore the king,
He counsels a divorce ; a loss of her
That, like a jewel, has hung twenty years
About his neck, yet never lost her lustre,
Of her that loves him with that excellence
That angels love good men with, even of her
That, when the greatest stroke of fortune falls,
Will bless the king : and is not this course pious ? ”*

“ Heaven keep me from such counsel ! ” said the Lord Chamberlain. “ All that dare look into these affairs see the main end, the French king’s sister. Heaven will one day open the king’s eyes, that so long have slept upon this bold bad man.”

Wolsey had arranged for King Henry to take a clever follower of his own as Secretary, and trusting to his influence over Campeius and Gardiner, the new Secretary, the wily Cardinal felt certain that the difficult business of the divorce would be carried through to the satisfaction of Henry. But he found a stubborn opponent in Queen Katharine. Her proud spirit, chafed by a sense of grave wrong, would not submit to the shame of divorce, and she prepared to make a strong assertion of her marital rights.

In the monastery of Black Friars a great assembly gathered to try the cause. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishops of Lincoln, Ely, Rochester, and Saint Asaph, many learned doctors and priests, scribes, noblemen and gentlemen sat as assessors and recorders. The two Cardinals, Wolsey and Campeius, were the judges. King Henry sat upon a throne of state and

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Queen Katharine, removed some distance from him, looked upon the solemn array of ecclesiastics with scorn mingled with apprehensive fear. She refused to plead or to accept the Cardinals as her judges and boldly denounced Wolsey as her enemy. "I do refuse you as my judge," she cried in ringing tones, "and here, before you all, appeal unto the pope, to bring my whole cause before his holiness, and to be judged by him." As she uttered these words she turned, and left the court, walking proudly past the Cardinals, curtseying to the King, but carrying herself with all the lofty dignity of a noble queen and much-injured woman. Her courage appealed to the feelings of her husband and he could not conceal his admiration.

"Thy parts

*Sovereign and pious else, could speak thee out,
The queen of earthly queens. She's noble born,
And like her true nobility she has
Carried herself towards me."*

He watched Katharine as she passed out of sight, and then, as though ashamed of his action, he turned to the Bishops and once again recounted the story of his scruples. Wolsey by this time had realised that the question had become an exceedingly difficult one, and he changed his tactics somewhat and was relieved when Cardinal Campeius suggested an adjournment of the court in order that the Queen might be induced to withdraw her appeal to the Pope. At his words Henry started and fixed a lowering gaze upon the ecclesiastics. He had already had some private discourse with Cranmer, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, and this prelate had written a defence of the divorce and

also advised the King to ask the opinion of the Universities on the question "whether the laws of God allowed a man to marry his brother's widow." Cranmer himself had gone to lay the case before some of the learned doctors. Now the King turned away from Wolsey and Campeius, muttering to himself :

*" I may perceive
These cardinals trifle with me : I abhor
This dilatory sloth and tricks of Rome.
My learn'd and well-beloved servant, Cranmer,
Prithee return ; with thy approach, I know,
My comfort comes along.—Break up the court ;
I say, set on."*

That night Wolsey and Campeius had a long and anxious consultation. Matters in Rome were fast approaching a climax and Campeius resolved to return to Italy forthwith. The absence of Cranmer puzzled the Cardinals, and the opposition of Katharine seemed to make the outlook hopeless. They determined, however, to try the effect of a final appeal, and sought the Queen in her private apartments. Katharine was depressed and sad. As they approached her room they heard the sound of a lute, and a fresh young voice sang this song :

*" Orpheus with his lute made trees,
And the mountain tops that freeze,
Bow themselves when he did sing :
To his music plants and flowers
Ever sprung, as sun and showers
There had made a lasting spring."*

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*Every thing that heard him play,
Even the billows of the sea,
Hung their heads, and then lay by.
In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep, or hearing die.*

Again, with wily suggestion, the Cardinals strove to induce the Queen to favour their designs, but she remained unshaken by their eloquence and they were compelled to leave her presence unsatisfied. Without taking formal leave of King Henry Campeius hastened to Rome, and Wolsey prepared to meet the difficulties which he clearly foresaw were now like mountains in his path. He had for long been carrying on a secret correspondence with friends immediately about the Pope, and had made an inventory of all his wealth in order to see how much he could afford to pay for the attainment of his greatest ambition. The Popedom was at last almost within his grasp. If Henry obtained a divorce from Katharine Wolsey intended to arrange a marriage for him with the Duchess of Alençon, the sister of the French King. But events turned out other than he intended. Henry married Anne Boleyn secretly, and by means of spies and an oversight the Cardinal's designs upon the Popedom were laid before him, with the inventory, drawn up most carefully by Wolsey himself, of all the long accumulated treasures of the grasping, careful prelate. When Henry read the documents all the cruel fierceness of his nature was aroused and he determined to bring down the Cardinal in final and irretrievable ruin.

Norfolk and Suffolk, with those who were in their

confidence, saw the King enter his audience-chamber with a frowning brow and hasty step. In his hands he clutched two documents. Again and again he perused them and his rage seemed to increase. So absorbed was he in his occupation that he did not perceive Wolsey standing alone in one corner of the room. Henry said something in a low tone to Norfolk, and the noble knew at once that the hated Cardinal stood in deadly peril. The courtiers did not try to appease the King's wrath. On the contrary they added to it by many well-studied words. Wolsey himself, though feeling instinctively the danger in which he stood, had not yet perceived the King. It was not until Lovell, Henry's attendant, drew his attention to the fact that he realised the presence of his master. The King strove to hide his wrath beneath courteous words, but his scorn and hatred revealed themselves in sarcasm and gibe. Wolsey might have guessed by the way in which he used the words "audit," "inventory" and "stuff" that his letters and inventory had somehow come to the knowledge of his enemies. When Henry spoke of loyalty and obedience Wolsey lifted his head with pride and replied :

" I do profess

*That for your highness' good I ever labour'd
More than mine own ; that am, have, and will be—
Though all the world should crack their duty to you,
And throw it from their soul ; though perils did
Abound, as thick as thought could make 'em, and
Appear in forms more horrid—yet my duty,
As doth a rock against the chiding flood,
Should the approach of this wild river break,
And stand unshaken yours,"*

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Henry opened his hands and revealed two letters. One was the fatal inventory, the other and far more deadly bore the superscription written in Wolsey's own writing *To the Pope*. " 'Tis nobly spoken," cried the King, now entirely carried away with anger, " read o'er this ; and after, this : and then to breakfast with what appetite you have." He strode from the chamber, followed by the nobles, leaving Wolsey standing with white face and trembling hands, the document shaking in his nerveless fingers. Almost immediately Norfolk, Surrey, Suffolk and the Lord Chamberlain returned to announce that the Cardinal was disgraced, deprived of his offices, and ordered to confine himself in the palace of the Bishop of Winchester until the further pleasure of the King was announced. With some bitter gibes at the fallen prelate the nobles turned scornfully away, and Wolsey was left alone. His eyes filled with tears, his form shrunk as though stricken with a bolt from Heaven, and he could hardly force himself to speak. He knew that all his glory was on the point of vanishing, and that he was a broken, ruined man. At length he spoke :

*" Farewell ! a long farewell, to all my greatness !
This is the state of man : to-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hopes ; to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him ;
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
And, when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do. I have ventured,
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
This many summers in a sea of glory,
But far beyond my depth : my high-blown pride*



"Read o'er this!"

*At length broke under me, and now has left me,
Weary and old with service, to the mercy
Of a rude stream that must for ever hide me.
Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye :
I feel my heart new open'd. O, how wretched
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours !
There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars or women have :
And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
Never to hope again."*

A step aroused him and he smiled sadly as his faithful secretary Thomas Cromwell entered to bring him yet more sorrowful tidings.

"How does your grace?" said Cromwell, as he stood before his master.

"Why, well," was the reply. "Never so truly happy,
my good Cromwell.

*I know myself now ; and I feel within me
A peace above all earthly dignities,
A still and quiet conscience."*

Cromwell had heavy news to bring. Sir Thomas More had been chosen Lord Chancellor ; Cranmer made Archbishop of Canterbury, and Anne Boleyn had been publicly acknowledged by Henry as his Queen. Wolsey's ruin was complete. Cromwell was an able man whose future service to Henry was destined to be a high one, but as he looked upon the humbled, disgraced and abandoned Cardinal, his heart was touched and tears rolled down his cheeks. Kneeling before Wolsey he kissed his hand and begged his blessing "My prayers

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for ever and for ever shall be yours, my lord," he said
and Wolsey replied :

*" Cromwell, I did not think to shed a tear
In all my miseries ; but thou hast forced me,
Out of thy honest truth, to play the woman.
Let's dry our eyes : and thus far hear me, Cromwell ;
And, when I am forgotten, as I shall be,
And sleep in dull cold marble, where no mention
Of me more must be heard of, say, I taught thee ;
Say, Wolsey, that once trod the ways of glory,
And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour,
Found thee a way, out of his wreck, to rise in ;
A sure and safe one, though thy master miss'd it.
Mark but my fall and that that ruin'd me.
Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition :
By that sin fell the angels ; how can man then,
The image of his Maker, hope to win by it ?
Love thyself last : cherish those hearts that hate thee ;
Corruption wins not more than honesty.
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace,
To silence envious tongues. Be just, and fear not :
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,
Thy God's, and truth's ; then if thou fall'st, O Cromwell,
Thou fall'st a blessed martyr ! Serve the king ;
And prithee, lead me in :
There take an inventory of all I have,
To the last penny ; 'tis the king's : my robe,
And my integrity to heaven, is all
I dare now call mine own. O Cromwell, Cromwell !
Had I but served my God with half the zeal
I served my king, he would not in mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies."*

King Henry the Eighth 281

They left the court, and Wolsey afterwards set out for York, to which city he was followed by the Earl of Northumberland, who placed him under arrest. He was compelled to retrace his steps but was taken with illness at Leicester, where he sought refuge in the Abbey. Three nights later, about the stroke of eight in the evening, he died, giving his honours to the world again, his blessed part to Heaven, and slept in peace. So passed the great Cardinal after rising from a humble position to the highest station in the realm.

Word was brought to Katharine, as she lay grievously ill in her palace, that her mighty opponent had now passed away. The hand of Death was already upon the sorrowful, deserted Queen. Griffith, her faithful attendant, standing by her couch, thus spoke concerning Wolsey :

*“ This cardinal,
Though from an humble stock, undoubtedly
Was fashion'd to much honour from his cradle.
He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one ;
Exceeding wise, fair-spoken and persuading :
Lofty and sour to them that loved him not,
But to those men that sought him, sweet as summer.
And though he were unsatisfied in getting,
Which was a sin, yet in bestowing, madam,
He was most princely : ever witness for him
Those twins of learning that he raised in you,
Ipswich and Oxford ! one of which fell with him,
Unwilling to outlive the good that did it ;
The other, though unfinish'd, yet so famous,
So excellent in art and still so rising,
That Christendom shall ever speak his virtue.*

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*His overthrow heap'd happiness upon him ;
For then, and not till then, he felt himself,
And found the blessedness of being little :
And, to add greater honours to his age
Than man could give him, he died fearing God."*

Wolsey had injured the Queen in the most bitter way, and had been her most active opponent, but the charity which the solemn approach of Death brings made her heart gentle and forgiving. "Peace be with him," she said, and looking upon her servant she continued :

*"After my death I wish no other herald,
No other speaker of my living actions,
To keep more honour from corruption,
But such an honest chronicler as Griffith."*

From the presence of Death we turn to a brighter picture. Soon the bells rang out a joyous peal because to Anne Boleyn was born a daughter, who in happier times was to play her great part in English history. A winsome bonnie babe who crept into her father's heart, and made all England rejoice in the promise of a noble life. Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, prophesied for her great things and said :

*"This royal infant—heaven still move about her !—
Though in her cradle, yet now promises
Upon this land a thousand thousand blessings,
Which time shall bring to ripeness : she shall be—
But few now living can behold that goodness—
A pattern to all princes living with her,
And all that shall succeed : Saba was never
More covetous of wisdom and fair virtue
Than this pure soul shall be : all princely graces,*



"After my death I wish no herald,
But such an honest chronicler as Griffith."

*That mould up such a mighty piece as this is,
With all the virtues that attend the good,
Shall still be doubled on her : truth shall nurse her,
Holy and heavenly thoughts still counsel her :
She shall be loved and fear'd : her own shall bless her ;
Her foes shake like a field of beaten corn,
And hang their heads with sorrow. Good grows with her :
In her days every man shall eat in safety,
Under his own vine, what he plants, and sing
The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours :
God shall be truly known ; and those about her
From her shall read the perfect ways of honour,
And by those claim their greatness, not by blood."*

Thus with stately word of prophetic insight were the spacious days of great Elizabeth ushered in, and the curtain falls upon the magnificent series of historical plays which the kingly genius of Shakespeare has presented as a precious heritage to Britain's sons and daughters.

AFTERWORD

“In all the work of Shakespeare there is nothing more like himself than those quiet words of parting—
‘Be cheerful, sir ; our revels now are ended.’

“Yet they are not ended ; and the generations who have come after him, and have read his book, and have loved him with an inalterable personal affection, must each as they pass the way that he went, pay him their tribute of praise. His living brood have survived him, to be the companions and friends of men and women as yet unborn. His monument is still a feasting presence, full of light. . . .

“That short and troubled time of his passage during which he was hurried onward at an ever-increasing pace, blown upon by hopes and fears, cast down and uplifted, has gone like a dream, and has taken him bodily along with it. But his work remains. He wove upon the roaring loom of Time the garment that we see him by ; and the earth at Stratford closed over the broken shuttle.”

PROFESSOR SIR WALTER RALEIGH

Princes have but their titles for their glories,
An outward honour for an inward toil ;
And, for unfelt imagination,
They often feel a world of restless cares :
So that, betwixt their titles and low names,
There's nothing differs but the outward fame.

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